STRATEGY PLUS

IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST

Issue 4 January 1991 £1.95

GETTING IT ON WITH GENGHIS

PLUS

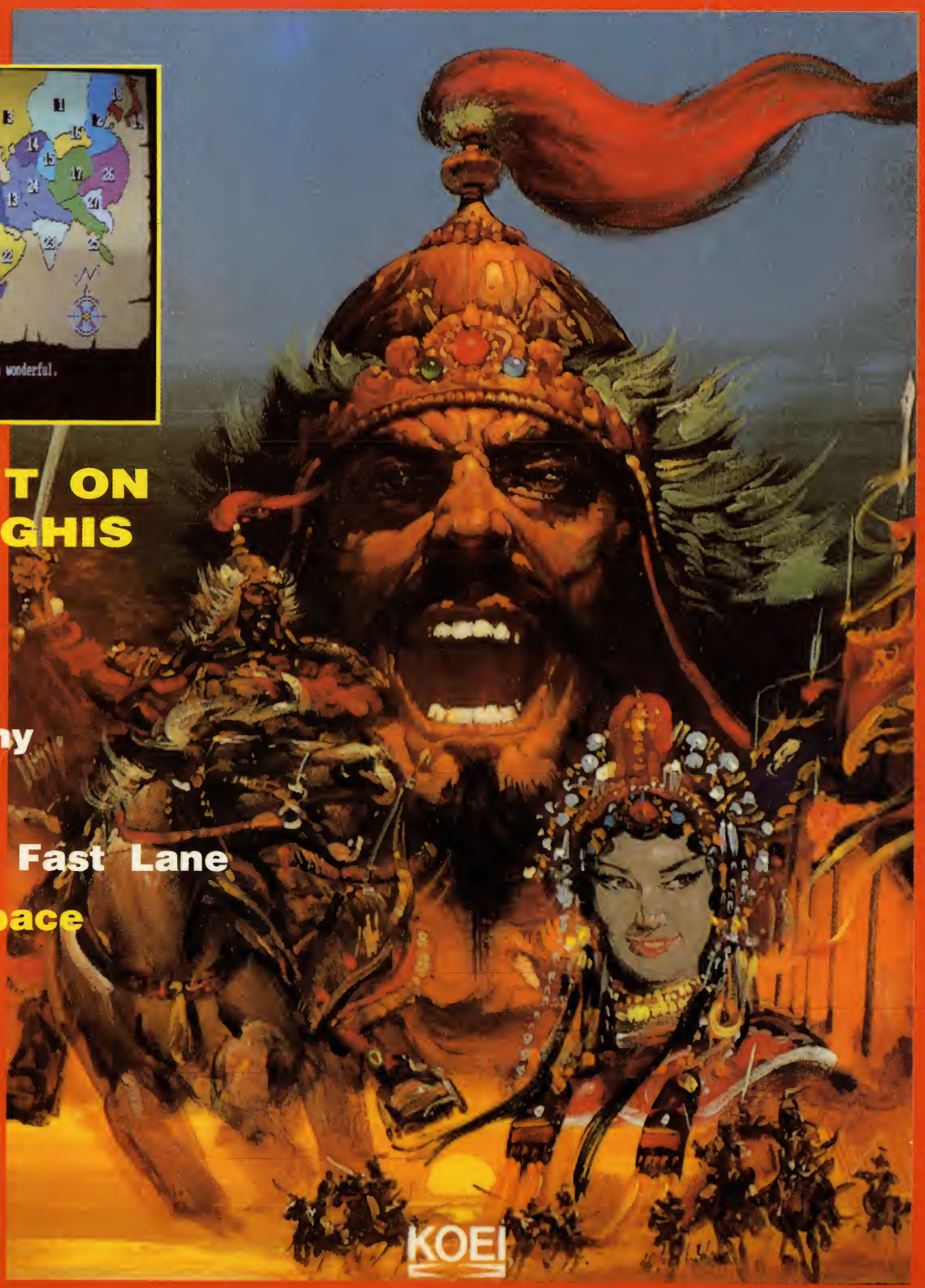
Space 1889

Altered Destiny

Links

Jones In The Fast Lane

Murders in Space



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• C.G.A., E.G.A., V.G.A., TANDY 16 COLOUR AND AD LIB CARD •

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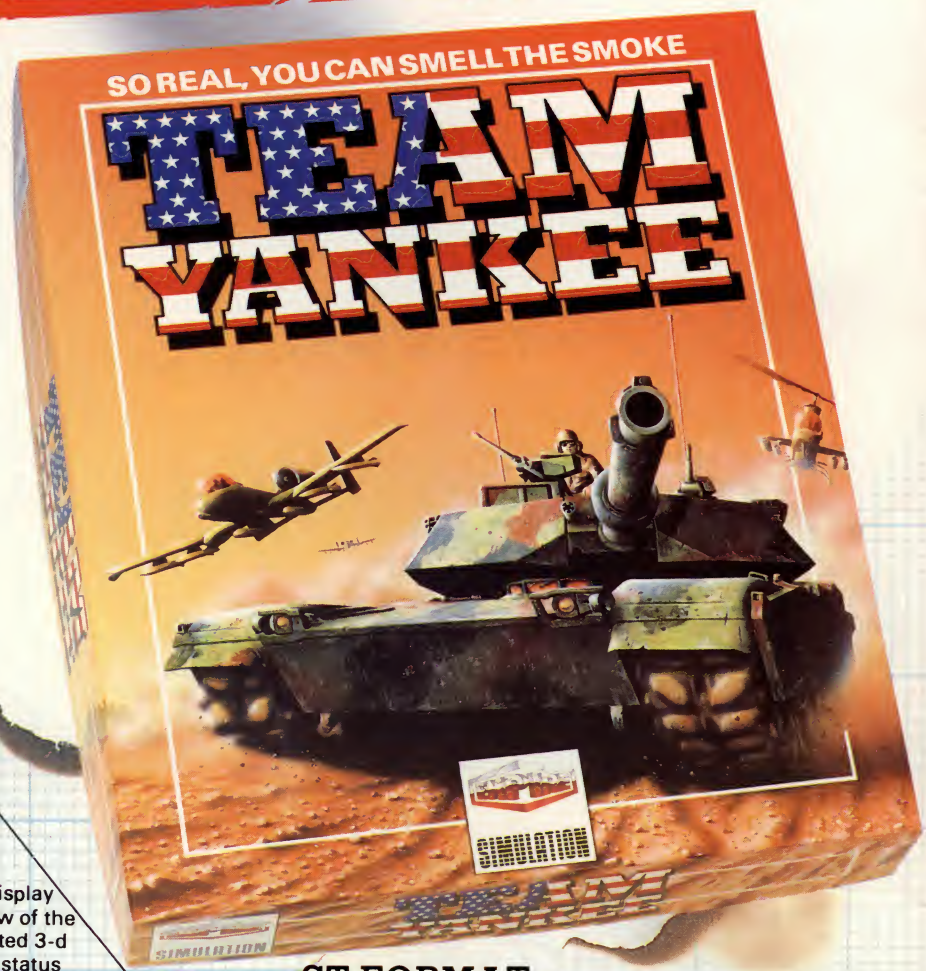

Team Yankee is designed to test your leadership and tactical skills to the quick. You can display in either **"quadrant mode"** where all four platoons may be controlled at once

or

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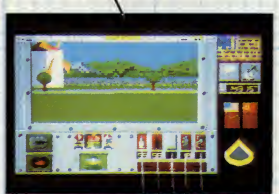

You have the flexibility to display either an overhead map view of the surrounding area, a simulated 3-d view of the battlefield, or a status screen showing the performance of all vehicles in a platoon. Irrespective of which screen mode you choose during battle, there is a constant column of information to the right of the screen.

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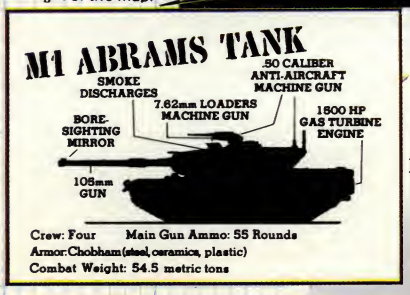
The major capability on the quadrant map screen is to alter the movement and formation of any platoon. The whole of the map may be viewed at once, or you may zoom into any portion of the battlefield using the icons to the right of the map.



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• The tanks have been superbly animated, with great attention to detail! • This has to be a must for anyone.....!

STRATEGY PLUS

• This is a game and a half! • The use of four screens in one is simply brilliant - at times its almost like playing on four computers at once. • I find it hard to fault this game - I quickly found myself hooked on a genre of game which previously held no interst.

Engine smoke This will prove very useful in confusing your enemy if you find yourself in a tight corner.

Rotation icon and compass display.

Infra red (or thermal) **imaging** This feature is very useful for identifying vehicles camouflaged on the edge of forests. Contary to popular belief the thermal image is green and not red.

Zoom. When this icon is accessed the central portion of the screen is magnified by a factor of 10.

Laser range finder. The range finder will lock on to a reflective target if the firing cursor is placed directly over the object.

Wide formation icon. This increases the spacing between vehicles in your platoon to 100 metres.

Narrow formation icon. This reduces the inter-vehicle spacing in your platoon to 50 metres.

Vee. a vee formation.

Echelon left - places your vehicles on a right to left diagonal relative to your direction.

Wedge - places your vehicles in a wedge formation.

Scroll icon: The four arrows underneath the ETA display allow you to scroll your map in any of the four directions.

Dead Stop icon. This red icon, causes your platoon to come to a dead halt when clicked.

In line - places your vehicles in a line abreast relative to your direction.

Column - places your vehicles in a line ahead relative to your direction.

Echelon right - places your vehicles on a left to right diagonal relative to your direction.

EMPIRE

SIMULATION

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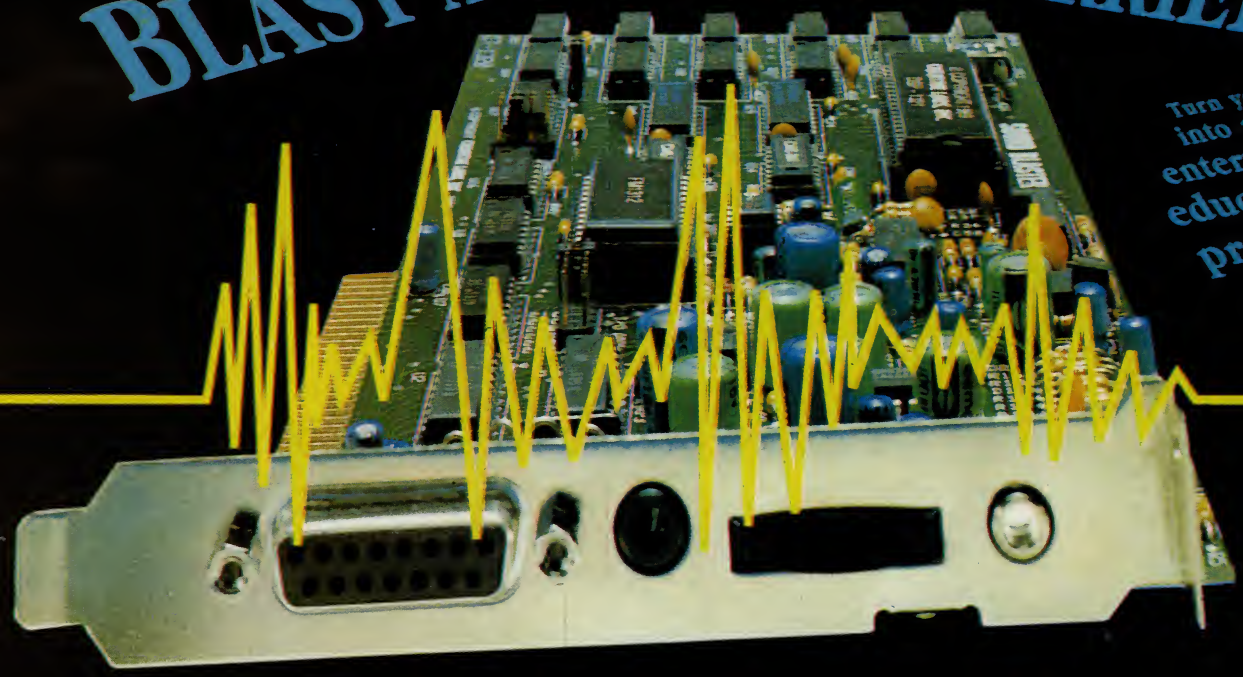

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STRATEGY PLUS

Number 4 January 1991

Cover: Genghis Khan by Koei/Infogrames

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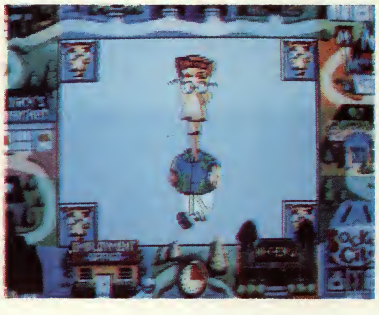

Jones in the Fast Lane

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Whither the ST?

ST owners have woken up to the fact they are now in the same position as 8 bit owners were four years ago. With the arrival of games like **Wonderland** and **Kings Quest V**, Amiga owners are about to get the same nasty shock. Not exactly a short, sharp, one. More like slow torture.

With the ST the problem is easily explainable – the crucial nature of the US market where MS DOS is King. The PC format accounts for 65% of the 16 bit games market in the US. The Amiga 10%. The remaining 25% is shared by the also-rans which include Atari. Hence most US software houses don't bother to port over to the ST. As most of the innovative strategy and adventure games emanate from that quarter, this leaves ST owners with an interest in such games firmly up the creek. The STE was supposed to be the saviour. However, the launch was a fiasco of the kind that only Atari could manage. Not only that, but from a gamer's point of view, it offered little in the way of genuine innovation.

The Amiga is a fine games machine, but one whose sell-by date is rapidly approaching. None of this is the machine's fault. It is simply that the games have outgrown it. Sure, you could upgrade to an Amiga 1500 and add a hard disk, but for the cash you could get a 386 PC with all the accessories.

At this point all the PC owners are probably getting ready to play a whole pack of smug cards. Don't bother. The signs are that unless you own a very fast 386, you'll be paying a visit to the hock shop fairly sharpish if you want the best platform on which to run your games. So what is the answer? The truth is, no one knows. Least of all us. A year ago we could have advised anyone looking for the definitive games machine *and* a good computer: 'buy a 286 PC and you won't regret it – at least not for a couple of years'.

Looming on the horizon is CD-ROM and CD-I. Theoretically these would be the perfect platforms for games – virtually no memory restrictions and, once the full motion video chip arrives (latest ETA: 1992), television quality graphics. Phillips and Sony, though, which are jointly developing the CD-I system, have other ideas. Misguidedly, they seem to think that education is more important than games (little wonder that Phillips is in so much financial trouble!). As a consequence, most of the initial software will be aimed at schools, or 'home education'. Phillips does have a piece of software involving the sport of golf, but it would be an exaggeration to describe it as a 'game'.

Sierra is reputed to be developing its own CD-ROM drive, and the company certainly has the software that would be ideal for this format. Then there is the legendary CDTV. This has already had more launches than the Cammill Laird shipyard, the latest of which is due to take place at the CES show in Las Vegas (full report shortly) this month. Exactly what it can do, or what sort of software will support it is still something of a mystery. As if all this wasn't enough, consider all the 16 bit consoles steaming in from the East. The future, then, is riddled with as much confusion as excitement. Our advice to the ST owners, who, after all, inspired this article, is: maintain a stiff upper lip, and wait until the dust settles. Yes, it is frustrating to see all these super sounding games pass you by, but unless you want to spend £1000 on a machine which may appear obsolete within a year, you really have no choice.

Not the news!

Owing to a rather important birthday in December, the news has been cancelled this issue. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. SP

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JONES IN THE FAST LANE

Life Is A Game

by Brian Walker

IT'S KINDA hard to dislike Yukville. It's a place where men are men, and woman are girlies. Anybody can get ahead here, though. But to get ahead you get a job, right? No problem. Yuksville has got lots of jobs. So what if you get paid $4 an hour. What are you, a goddam commie or something?

If it's schooling you're looking for Yuksville has got education to sell. And I mean sell. We'll guarantee your kids get the best grades money can buy. But hey! A guy's gotta have fun too. All work and no joy makes Jones a dull boy. So let me tell you, if anywhere in the world offers a better night out than Monolith burgers then I'd like to hear about it. None of that fancy French stuff in Yukville, just good ole American cookin'.

We don't have much time for hobbies here except shopping. But what's wrong with shopping? If you're feeling down, go buy something. If you can't buy happiness in Yuksville, well, you just can't buy happiness. So if you're looking for a great way of life, then get on down to our little town. Bring your cheque book, bring your credit cards – we don't take kindly to welfare scroungers. There's work to be done, and money to be made. Nice talkin' to y'all.

It's A Goal

The number of computer games genuinely suitable for more than two players can be counted on one hand. Sierra On-Line decided to do something about this. And, as is normally the way when Sierra decides to do something, Sierra succeeded. **Jones in the Fast Lane** is a homage to the type of boardgame popular in the fifties. Its closest antecedent is probably MB's **Game of Life**. Apart from the obvious differences, the main variance between these two games is that **Jones** mercilessly, though good naturedly, parodies the materialism that is the essence of American life, in particular the yuppie ethos of the eighties. The second contrasting element is that it is also a game of some skill. No doing what the dice tell you here. Each player determines their own goals within given parameters, and then sets about realising them. The first player to achieve their goals wins. The goals themselves – money, career, happiness, and education, are normal enough, but realising them provides not only a challenge, but also a humorous insight into the problems of 'making it'.

The percentage level chosen for each goal affects game length. This can be varied from one hour to four. Handicapping is also possible (this is a game where experience tells). Once this has been decided upon the next step is to select one (of four) animated characters as your alter ego.

The main screen depicts an approximation of the sort of board(game) referred to earlier. Using the increasingly popular 'point and click' interface, the player selects a location on the board. His character will then travel to it in what looks like a cross between a Volkswagen and a green pepper. The venues on the board reflect the make-up of Anytown USA: hamburger restaurant, college, discount warehouse, and most crucially, an employment agency.

To do anything in the town you need cash or a credit card. But to obtain either you will need a job. You can try to get a job at the employment agency, but chances are you won't have the experience or qualifications. But how do you get the experience if you haven't worked before? Maybe good qualifications will swing it, but to get qualifications means college. College costs money. Money needs to be earned. But remember: you don't have the qualifications or the experience to get the job to earn the money. Sound familiar? But don't worry, Monolith Burgers are hiring. That's if the job hasn't already been taken. Just as in life, the early bird catches the worm.

Time is an important element in the game – one turn represents a week. After the fourth week the rent is due. Failure to pay means your wages (assuming you're receiving some) will be garnished and a premium levied.

Middle Of The Road

As in most Sierra games, the joy comes from the process of discovery and **Jones** is no exception to this. In view of Sierra's reputation, it's perhaps worth pointing out that this is not an adventure game. There are problems to solve, but these tend to be of a logical, rather than strictly puzzle solving nature. It is possible to play solo against computer opponents, but it's nowhere near as much fun as playing with friends. I played it with some teenagers. They were enthralled, and also not entirely unfamiliar with some of the scenarios encountered within the game.

Jones in the Fast Lane is fun, and easy to play – the 'manual', at only two pages long, reflects the game's simplicity. This is understandable as it is a family game rather than one aimed at the serious enthusiast. All of which would be fine were it not for the price tag of £39.95. As such it must be regarded, like many of the items on sale at the Socket Discount Warehouse, as one of life's less essential purchases. SP

Designed by
Meredith Whaley, Christpher Whaley, Robert Whaley and Kelly Walker

Published by
Sierra On-Line

Price £39.99

Available on the PC Amiga version to follow

EGA, VGA (256 colours)

AdLib, Roland MT-32/LAPC-1, and Games Blaster sound supported.

GENGHIS KHAN

A Study Of Regal Principle

by Brian Walker

Designed by
Kou Shibusawa

Published by
Koei/Infogrames

Price £24.99

Available for the PC
and Amiga
Reviewed on the PC

CGA (black and
white), EGA

1-4 players

GENGHIS Khan was, from all accounts, a pretty big man. It is, therefore, appropriate that the third in the trilogy of Koei's historical simulations should be a pretty big game. Thanks to games like **Nobunaga's Ambition** (soon to have a sequel), and **Romance of the Three Kingdoms**, Prof Kou Shibusawa has established both himself and the Koei Corporation of Japan, as master exponents of the strategy genre.

Genghis Khan starts up in the year 1205. Along with the eponymous Mongol hero/villain, the starting line-up reads: Richard I (England), Alexious III (the Byzantine Empire), and Minamoto Yoritomo (Japan). Take your pick. The objective is the unification of the 'Eurasian Continent' comprising 27 countries. There is also a strictly solo scenario provided entitled 'Mongol Conquest' where the task is to unify Mongolia. This review will concentrate on the former.

One Arm Bandit Kings

A rather attractive coloured map is provided as a player aid along with a 119 page manual (these contents are based on the Koei version not the Infogrames version which may, or may not differ). The basic game system is that used in all Koei games, though there are always a few tweaks in each to take into account the idiosyncrasies of the various locales.

Set-up involves selecting one of the four aforementioned characters and then setting the parameters for that character. This is done in what is known colloquially as the 'one arm bandit phase': underneath each characteristic (six in all) a series of numbers flash by at lightning speed. These can be stopped by hitting the space bar. This process is then repeated for successors to-be, though the numbers are graduated downwards in accordance with age. If dissatisfied with your choice, an infinite series of attempts is possible. In addition to the rolling numbers, 100 points per character may be dispensed between all the parameters as you see fit. Certainly steps should be taken to ensure that all the parameters of the leader are over 100 initially, for every time you issue a command the value of each parameter will be lowered by one.

Command HQ

Unlike more inappropriate offerings, **Genghis Khan** makes no great claim to be a 'role-playing' game, and yet it operates in the best role-playing tradition by forcing the player to plan according to the nature of the character. All this is achieved by a classically simple system of character generation.

At the outset only one country is player controlled (assuming the solitaire mode). Three commands from a menu of 15 can be issued per turn, and therein lies the heart of the system of all the Koei games. Commands are represented by numbers which you simply type in. Towards the middle game leaders are unable to issue certain commands as they get older. Trading, for example, requires a certain level of judgement. To get his judgement up to the requisite level it is necessary to use the 'train' command. At this point it would be more realistic if he were to graciously step down rather than using up vital commands to wade off senility. To get around this, a sort of Kamikaze/euthanasia mission option is currently being explored.

Despite the relative simplicity of the command system, you have a feeling of total control of your domain. The choice of *which* commands to issue are crucial to success. Resource management, diplomacy, trading, military strategy, even a bit of nookie on the side, are all factored into the command structure. If another country is taken over a decision must be taken as to how to run it. Direct rule (one command per turn) is possible. It is also possible to nominate a governor (ie the computer) to run it. As a compromise a 'send policy' option exists whereby the governor will decide on policy. Personally I prefer direct control. There are enough countries to make the issuing of commands unwieldy, and besides, the cyborgs veer too much towards the psychopathic for my liking.

Whenever an attack occurs, a hexagonal tactical display pops up. The actual combat system, though, bears little relation to standard hexbound wargames. Troops consist of cavalry, infantry, and archers. The exact make-up of each division can be adjusted by one of the commands on the main display. One gold piece per head must be paid before forces are despatched. Likewise, provisions must be made available if they are to survive. Both these commodities can be acquired through shrewd use of the command system.

The outcome of combat is determined by the offensive and defensive values of the forces involved, though sheer strength of numbers plays a very large part also. The country a leader is currently resident in is defined as the 'base'. Great care must be taken here, for if the base is invaded the game is over. To avoid such an ignominious early bath it's essential, therefore, that if the battle is not going well the leader prepares a quick getaway to a friendly and adjacent province. If the leader is *attacking,* rather than being attacked, and suffers defeat he simply dies (the manual is a tad vague on this point so it's worth noting).

A successor may be nominated providing one is available. To qualify, the one who would be leader must be male and over the age of 10. Siblings are conceived via indiscreet use of the 'rendezvous' command. This provides a 'date' with an Empress of the leader's choice. Genghis does not take 'no' for an answer.

As if in tacit acknowledgement of the difficulty of survival, the game provides 10 saves. So if expiration is premature, a sort of reincarnation option can be executed. This means, of course, that the game can *possibly* be won via an unlikely sequence of 'comebacks'. Call me old fashioned, but this reeks of cheating. When you're dead, you're dead. That's life, so to speak.

The key to success is understanding the interrelationships between all the commands. The strength of the subject matter and the detail in which it is rendered, ensures that the game will never become an exercise in abstractions, however. The graphics make good use of EGA and manage to avoid that chunky orange look. They are, however, best described as solid rather than spectacular, but this is a game meant to engage the brain rather than the eye. As such, it should provide a stirring challenge for all those gamers who have been complaining about the poor quality of computer opponents. **Genghis Khan** is a very tough game even on level one (out of 5). The manual is essential reading if progress is to be made. This is no great chore, though. The production quality, at least in the Koei version, is of a high standard and the game routines are explained very clearly. In addition there are a wealth of historical details which provide a real feel for the period.

Frog Tartare

In addition to being a tough game, **Genghis Khan** is also a very good game. And a very long game. Rome wasn't conquered in a day and all that. Because of the 'save' mechanism this should not be a problem, however. In the multi player mode the time element becomes more crucial, but provided players are prepared to devote the necessary time it is certainly recommended. In the early and middle stages of the game information can be shared, thus solving the common problem of multi player software games, that of constant to and fro to the screen. One suggestion I would make is playing the game in two player mode with each player taking two leaders. Although they would not be able to help each other directly, they could certainly act in concert. This would also help reduce the risk of early elimination.

Considering the depth of the game and the graphics, it's remarkable that it has all been squeezed into just 384K of RAM. Even more remarkable is that it was first published (in Japan) in 1987! Infogrames are to be congratulated on finally making the game available in the UK.

Anybody looking for a good strategy game should look no further than this. On the grapevine we hear that **Nobunaga's Revenge** is on the way, along with a remarkable variation for Koei, **L'Empereur** – a Napoleonic game using the same system. *Mon dieu,* a Japanese game about Napoleon being marketed by the French in the UK! If that's what it takes, *bien sur*. I'd eat raw frog's legs rather than miss out on that. SP

Bandit Kings of Ancient China and Genghis Khan will both be released in the UK in January.

A strategy article on this game will appear in our next issue.

WE LIKE...

Bandit Kings (PC, Amiga)

Supremacy (All)

Command HQ (PC)

Breach 2 (All)

Imperium (All)

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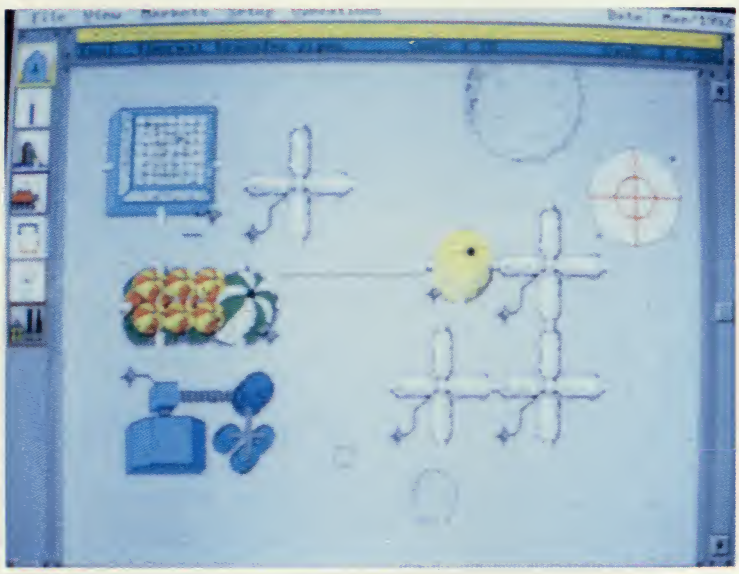
MOONBASE

Pie In The Sky

by Trevor Mendham



Designed by
Robert Green, Brett Adams, Brendan O'Connor

Published by
Wesson International

Price £34.99

Available for the PC only

CGA, EGA, VGA, MCGA, Hercules

AS **MOONBASE** commander you must build housing, science units and manufacturing plants, generate revenue and keep your people happy. Ultimately, your aim is to become self-sufficient, producing enough to survive on plus a surplus to export to Earth. The game is superficially very similar to **Sim City** set on the Moon and comparisons are unavoidable.

The first job is to decide on a position for the Space Station Command Module (SSCM). The terrain is fairly simple – rock with the odd crater! Having placed the SSCM, expansion can commence. Buildings available fall into the categories of Habitats, Science, Mining/Processing, Support, Thermal, Power and Manufacturing. Each of these has a number of sub-options, giving a much larger range of choice than in **Sim City**, and all have their specific purpose. For example, Habitats give people somewhere to live, Mining/Processing and Manufacturing provide materials which can be sold, Science modules provide the chance of making valuable discoveries and so on. Needless to say, all these cost money.

Units need two sets of supply lines. One brings power in, the other takes heat out. Power can be supplied from either Solar Cells (inefficient), Fission Power Stations (which have a tendency to explode, taking most of the base with them!) or Fusion Power Stations (once the secret has been discovered!). Heat needs to be taken away from buildings, via radiators. A unit must be attached to both Power and Heat lines in order to become operational. Unlike **Sim City**, you are actually building a unit rather than simply allocating space, and once wired up it becomes effective almost immediately.

Units also require workers, and juggling this is tricky. Too few and complaints about overwork start arriving. Too many and it becomes necessary to build new Habitation Units to prevent overcrowding. Get the balance wrong and at best productivity drops, at worst you are crippled by strikes.

Once production starts, output can be sold to Earth. The market for various commodities fluctuates, and current prices are displayed at the top of the screen. For the first few years, the base is resupplied by the annual shuttle – thereafter NASA leaves it to its own devices. A shuttle crash can be disastrous, so build a landing pad in a safe area as soon as possible.

Podule Building

Overall, **Moonbase** appears to provide a less complex simulator but more player options than **Sim City**; it is definitely more of a *game*. In particular, the ability to play the markets gives a much greater feeling of control. Combine this with graphics which are interesting (though hardly spectacular) and you should have a game which will appeal to those who like the idea of **Sim City**, but find it too mild for their tastes. So what went wrong?

The manual, to start with. This is written in story form, with hints and information implied in the text; direct rules are presented in highlighted boxes. The idea makes a certain sense, as some people certainly find manuals offputting and too much to cope with. Unfortunately, the result is a serious lack of information. For example, you are told how to build roads, but I can find no reference as to what they actually *do!* Are they simply to add aesthetic appeal, or are they essential to transporting goods? While a story adds atmosphere, it has to be accompanied by a real reference manual. I have a nagging suspicion that the **Moonbase** simulator is actually a lot cleverer than I have given it credit for, but the manual fails to do it justice.

Different Versions

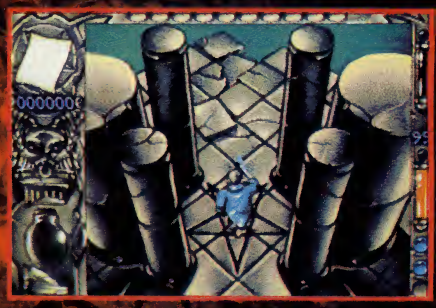
Along with the manual you get an errata sheet. This contains some important information – for instance the victory conditions! It also points out that some people may find the 5¼" disk contains a later version than the 3½" disks, as was indeed the case with my review copy. Fortunately I have both drives, but people who only have a 3½" drive might be upset.

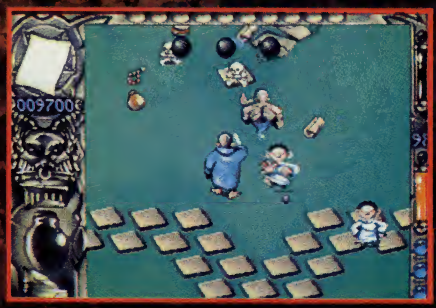
I've left the worst to last. The game is bugged, seriously. It freezes and crashes, sometimes during play, sometimes when trying to load a large saved game. During a long game, sometimes you find that a new structure is a 'ghost', appearing on the map but not being 'really' there. I have tried the game on several different PCs with different configurations; all suffer the same problems.

Everything about **Moonbase** smacks of a game which was released too soon. Given more time to iron out the bugs and produce a decent reference manual this game could have been a best seller. It would have appealed to those who find **Sim City** too serious and also offered an enjoyable change of pace. SP

MYSTICAL

How far off seems the title of Supreme Magician ! From the Marsh of Eternal Stench to the Garden of Eden, face danger and humour, and try to survive the deluge of monsters, thoroughly determined to stop you !!!





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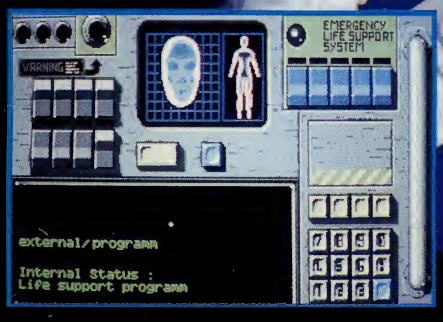


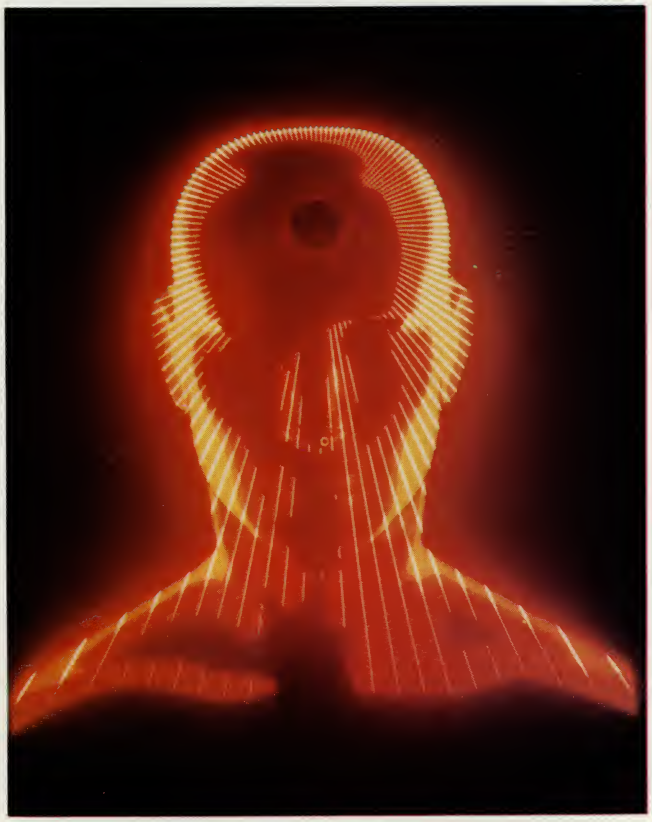
Everything was running like clockwork on the orbital station PEGASUS. The discrete vibration of the apparatus assured the eight members of the staff concentrating on their experiments. Calm stillness everywhere... until the discovery of the first victim. Then the adventure tumbled into horror.

INFOGRAMES

For : ATARI ST & STE, AMIGA, PC & Compatibles

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND?

A tourists' guide to Imperium, by Matthew Stibbe



IMPERIUM is a complex game. The elements of commerce, politics, military power and geography interact with one another to produce a deep simulation of running a space empire. How did it come to be like this, and why did I make one design decision and not another? I shall start by trying to describe the germ of the idea, and what it might have been, and then I shall examine the design of each aspect of the game, as a part of the whole.

My interest in space empires, already a staple of science fiction, was historical. I wanted to imagine how humans would behave in the next millennium, faced with a whole series of new, and yet somehow familiar challenges – exploration, colonisation, and conflict. All of these have historically taken place within a framework of economics, and had political consequences as well as causes. Expansion, whether of an empire, or an economy has its own dynamic, and without this economic motive, military and political action seemed baseless and inexplicable.

Early on in the design, which was originally to become a play-by-mail strategy game with many human players, I decided to focus on the three main elements of the game. The first expression of the design was this summary: 'The game simulates the next thousand years of human development. The player becomes the leader of mankind in its attempt to build a Human empire of the stars. The game simulates the relationships of fledgling empires of the new order with Earthkind. This relationship includes political, economic, and military aspects.'

I developed the economics model first, as this was to be perhaps the most complicated part of the game. It affects everything, and yet works in the most subtle and indirect ways. Inhabited planets trade independently, in dozens of commodities, with many other planets, using several formulae, and huge tables to calculate who with, for how much, and when. Early on I drew a chart displaying the complex interrelationship of the various elements in the economics model.

The automatic trade can be affected directly by certain player actions: embargoes, over-production edicts, taxation, and indirectly by conquest or conflict. Production is virtually zero-sum (it isn't quite for a special purpose), so that, for example, if there are twenty colonised planets in the universe, they will produce an amount of, say, computers, that is more or less equal to the total universal demand for computers. This was designed to produce the economic imperative to colonisation and expansion for the more planets that your empire controls, producing computers, the better it is for your empire. Conversely, if your opponents control most computer production, and embargo you, you have real problems! Some planets are better at producing certain kinds of goods than others, for reasons that should be self apparent (tech level, planet type, population size...).

Trade in itself is important, in that it generates wealth for use in military and civil expenditure, and this places a subtle strategic restraint on anti-social actions like embargoes and blockades. Despite the central importance of the economics model, the player is deliberately denied gross control of it. Only long term strategy and policies will allow the player to win the economics war.

The politics and diplomacy are very closely related. I wanted to make to give the idea that people were important to ruling an empire – after all, even with computers, you can't do everything yourself, especially when your orders can only travel at the speed of light. The desire to keep everything within physical limits predicated everything in the game, and was the reason for the design including local delegates. Subordinates also occur in the military part of the game and in the economics (as your appointees run planets), so in a way the politics extends into the other parts of the game.

The most dynamic part of the whole simulation is the military. It can change the whole course of a game, and is the area of the game in which the player can exert the greatest direct influence.

I designed the user interface with everything else in mind. It was to be an interactive database, for the user to explore all the depths of information that the game had to offer. It was to empower the user, to enable him or her to access as much or as little information as required, and to delegate authority to the computer for areas of the game which were not of interest. I had certain ideas about how it should work – the menus, icon buttons, collapsible reports – all of which are common to a number of graphical user interfaces. However, the user interface was designed specifically with the idea of an Imperial database as its aim, and the maps, graphical displays, sliders, news window and the clipboard were designed to make

Imperium was designed by Matthew Stibbe and Nick Wilson, and is published by Electronic Arts

The game is available on all formats, price £24.99

the interface as powerful for the user as possible.

'Whirlwind,' a computer designed in the 50s, ran the United States air defence environment until 1983. It can still be seen working in a Boston computer museum. Not so much Star Wars as Flash Gordon! By the same token, I like to think, given the slow adoption of new technology by governments, that perhaps in the year 2100, an imperial commander will use a system very much like the one in this game to run a real space empire! Whatever else may happen; in the realms of real politics, economics, and military power, it is certain that 'what I assume, he or she will assume.' The details may change but the principles will not.

What's What

This is a series of questions and answers which may help people get more out of the game.

How do I build bigger ships?

The main factor is the empire's average technology level. Increase the mean and you can build bigger ships. There are other obvious factors like money, resources and tech level of the planet to take into account.

What is money worth in the game? How much should I give my subordinates?

The best way of thinking about money (and how much to offer in alliances and as stipends for subordinates) is to compare the prices of different ships. A single scout is about the same level of complexity and cost as a present day patrol boat: several million pounds, a cruiser is about £100 million. Do you want your men to have an income of several million, or only a few hundred thousand? How much should you offer for an alliance – the equivalent of a couple of aircraft carriers, or a whole fleet?

How important is time, and how does it affect combat and communications?

I 'cheated' a little. I based the game on the premise of everything working at the speed of light. Much of the game play revolves around the drug Nostrum which has various affects, among which is to extend life (so you can live 1000 years) and allow speedier communications (telepathically and/or with electronic enhancement although this is not explicit in the game).

The second exception is that there are methods of travelling faster than the speed of light. Both the drug and these high speed technologies underpin Earth's expansion between 2020 and 2030 (the first few years of the game). I don't want to give away too much more about the structure of the game, suffice to say that there is a sort of basic plot line to it as well as the simulation that sort of links these two things and others together.

So you have the problem of dealing with things in distant places using subordinates, which is important to the gameplay, and yet the game allows relatively high speed comms, travel and trade. SF writers always use this kind of cop-out, but I think **Imperium** gives the best of both worlds – delay, remoteness, personnel management, and enough 'action' to keep you involved.

How much of the game is randomised, and how much preprogrammed?

The map is more or less constant, although some planetary characteristics vary, and the aliens vary a great deal according to difficulty level and the character of their home planet, their pre-spaceflight evolution and so on. There are religious maniacs and rubber fetishists in space too! You can expect a game to last quite a long time, and a different game each time you play too.

Is it safe to raise credit to subsidise the expansion of the empire (budget deficits)?

You can borrow money, but often proves exorbitantly expensive in terms of interest, and therefore impacts on your popularity and social conditions of the empire. However most empires are built on credit, for example about a quarter of the Austro-Hungarian empire's budget before the First World War in any one year went to pay interest on the national debt. Interestingly the British empire was driven by a surplus of credit, not subsidised by government borrowing – but I digress.

Why aren't there any female subordinates?

I know this is shameful. The original design called for them, and my friend, Tamsin Lewis (an Oxford classics scholar) produced an equal number of classical names for women as for men. Sadly, there was not enough memory or disk space for female faces, so they were dropped on the sexist assumption that it would be men running the empire (as they did the Roman empire). Sorry!

What about Nostrum?

Try to get two or more Nostrum planets, as these are the most attractive to aggressors, and you will probably be constantly defending and attacking them, so a second source and stockpile will help. For Nostrum read oil, for Nostrum-planet read Kuwait, and see what I mean.

What other advice do you have for players?

This was advice from one player to another on CompuServe, and it is quite useful, so I shall repeat it verbatim:

General tip on alliances, particularly with the starting sliders at the default (or close) levels: make an economic alliance with each empire and set tax rates at about 2% (or even 1%) and offer about 300 units of money as part of the deal. Such an alliance seems to be readily accepted at the beginning of the game, and will help stimulate trade. Be *sure* your various ambassadors are in good shape, though, and are effective – they have a big influence on the success or failure of your negotiations!

I've found the alliances tend to help prevent early outbreaks of war as well. It may be my imagination – the game's so complex it's hard to say this for sure – but I managed to go around one time with *lots* of trade with the other empires, and as soon as I inched the Imperial Production slider up a tiny bit, one of the empires took out after me. As I said, I'm not positive about the cause and effect relation there, but it sure seemed like it.

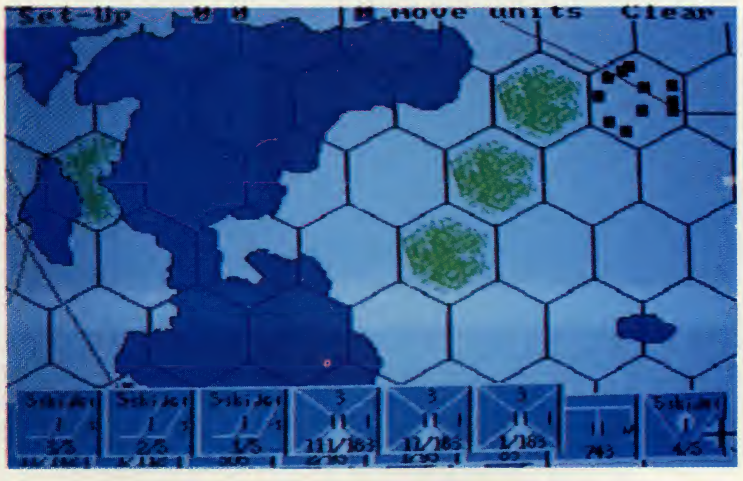
Depending on how you set initial conditions, you can also play mysterious and begin the game with a complete embargo on all trade with all other empires. This is likely to produce some shortages, but at least you stockpile quickly and force trade between planets within your empire (be sure you are exploring and colonising a good mix of resources, especially agricultural, if you go this way). The only problem I found was that this strategy leads to lots of curiosity on the part of the other empires, and they tend to do what the West did to China in the 19th century. SP

Matthew Stibbe is an undergraduate historian at Pembroke College, Oxford. Before he was a finalist he spent his time designing computer games and university magazines. Now he enjoys prevarication. He can be contacted on CompuServe (71660,155), BIX or CIX (mstibbe), or BT Gold (74:MIK2553).

WHITE DEATH

Stalin Wasn't Stallin'

by Sandy Eisen



BY THE end of the 1970s GDW had established a reputation as one of the best publishers of serious historical board wargames. Their games emphasized rigorous historical accuracy and innovative designs. Frank Chadwick's **White Death** was no exception and it became one of my favourites.

The game mechanics are complex. Units represent German companies and battalions and Soviet battalions and regiments. Each is rated for a multiplicity of factors including morale, together with a separate strength marker which is adjusted as losses are taken.

The combat system elegantly differentiates between conventional direct fire, anti-tank fire, artillery support and barrage. As units take losses their effectiveness is gradually reduced, whilst the importance of morale is emphasized by the need for morale checks after any losses.

The movement rules and sequence of play introduced the innovative idea of a variable number of impulses for each player. Players alternate impulses until both have expended their total movement points available for that game turn. This is always 10 points for all units on both sides. These points are best thought of as slices of time from the five day turn. It is up to the players, within certain restrictions, to decide how long their impulses will be, and so also decide how many impulses will occur in each turn.

Supply is of vital importance to both sides. There is an abstract system of supply points which are received each turn and which may be accumulated. Supply points are far more likely to be expended every turn as each impulse in which any unit attacks or artillery fires requires this. There are never enough supply points available, so that the allocation and usage on both sides is critical to proper play. The number of points expended is the same regardless of the number of units assaulting or barraging.

This is one area where I consider the rules oversimplified. I can accept that a more accurate supply system would require more work and book-keeping by the players, but the existing oversimplification lets the rest of the game down. Perhaps a computerised version of the game could keep track of how many divisions are attacking each impulse and charge a proportional supply cost?

White Death On The PC

I have described the original paper wargame in some detail as it is almost identical to the computer game. Indeed **White Death** is the most faithful computer version of a board wargame I have seen. The original map and unit counters are beautifully reproduced on the screen.

Playing the computer game takes you through the same sequence of play and mechanics. Every choice and decision available in the original is available on screen. Using the mouse, units can be 'picked up' off the map, so that stacks can be examined, held in a 'raster' or holding area, inspected to reveal precise strength and factor information, and then placed back on the map either without moving, or in their new positions.

The computer will not permit enemy stacks to be examined, although the number of units in all stacks is indicated. If an attempted move violates movement, stacking or zone of control rules then the player is informed of this and the move is not permitted.

The main detailed map scrolls nicely and toggles to a strategic map of the entire board. The strategic map shows units only as colour-coded blocks, but terrain details remain clear and the result is a good overview of the entire playing area. Movement of a selection frame with the mouse allows any part of the strategic map to be quickly chosen for switching back to the detailed view.

One particularly useful feature allows the strategic map to display all hexes to which a selected unit could move to in the current impulse. Other features display areas of supply and isolation for each side, and allow units to be located. Except for the absence of proper limited intelligence options, the map displays are excellent.

After a player has moved all units that he desires, barrages and assaults are designated. Each choice of target hex takes the player through a series of selection screens to pick out the individual units which will be involved. The opposing player then has a similar series of screens to chose his defensive fire. Now the phasing player specifies exact supporting artillery fire (if available) and the exact allocation of his fire-power against individual enemy units. The odds achieved for each attack are displayed as selected. Combat factors can be juggled and switched between units in an attempt to gain the best possible combination.

Finally, when resolve is selected, the computer will flash up a series of random die rolls and apply the result

Designed by
Al and Joe Benincase

Published by
Internecine

Price £29.99 (Amiga), £34.99 (PC)

Available for Amiga and PC
Reviewed on the PC

to each combat in turn. Although a message does display a summary of the combat result after each attack, I found that this appears for too short a duration to be easily followed. Possibly this is not a problem on slow machines, but 386 users will curse for the lack of an adjustable delay period.

Playing The Game

The commands used to play the game are accessed through a system of menus most kindly described as cumbersome. They do work, and with familiarity can work in a fast and enjoyable fashion. However both the game's commands and the skills of playing the game do have a steep learning curve.

I started with the advantages of being familiar with the original wargame and highly motivated to play it on my PC. Despite these I must confess that it took me several hours before I really felt happy about understanding what was happening.

Perhaps I am a little stupid to expect to pick up a game as complex and sophisticated as **White Death** in less time, or perhaps I am just stupid. I did read through the 40 page manual only once, and with hindsight I do realise that more studying and less drooling over the screen might have been faster in the long run.

What does concern me is how easily a player who is not familiar with GDW's **White Death**, or similar boardgames, would pick things up. I am concerned that such a novice might give up on the game before he discovered that once you know how to play it there is a fascinating and exciting game hidden inside.

Once I could understand what was happening and how to change it, I found **White Death** addictive to play, and far more convenient than the original. Set-up did not involve any counter sorting. Multiple saves and restores could be performed easily.

The computer version of **White Death** remains a complex game to play. To play it well requires thought and planning in addition to a full understanding of the rules. As well as formulating an overall strategy for the scenario, each turn and impulse requires it's own plan. The decisions concerning how many movement points are to be used in each impulse, and how supply points are to be expended are crucial. These choices will dictate the options for movement and combat which will be available in the ensuing impulse and turn.

The computer can play either side with a fair degree of intelligence which seems historically appropriate.

Alternatively two human players can take their turns. There is a primitive method for telephone play via a modem. This works by sending a saved game file between machines at the appropriate time. I have not tried it, but in principle it should also work for two machines linked with a null-modem cable. Despite not being interactive this should provide the best environment for two player games as changing places many times in each turn would be avoided.

What Was Changed

There are no designer's notes to confirm it, but I suspect that the intention of the programmer was to change nothing from GDW's original design. Nevertheless there are some differences, and I suspect that they are unintentional.

The operation of the stacking rules seems to have changed slightly, in that the computer will permit all the component units of a Soviet infantry division to stack in one hex. Although this contravenes the original rules and also the manual it is not important.

Far more significant is the omission of a retreat-before-combat option for ski units. Both sides should enjoy the use of several small, mobile ski units which can evade attacks unless surrounded by ski-mobile attackers. These units are present, but without the special rule they cannot be used to form a delaying defence screen.

There may be other minor changes which I have not spotted. It is possible that the value of bunkers has been downgraded, as they seem easier to overwhelm than I remember in the original.

What Was Left Out

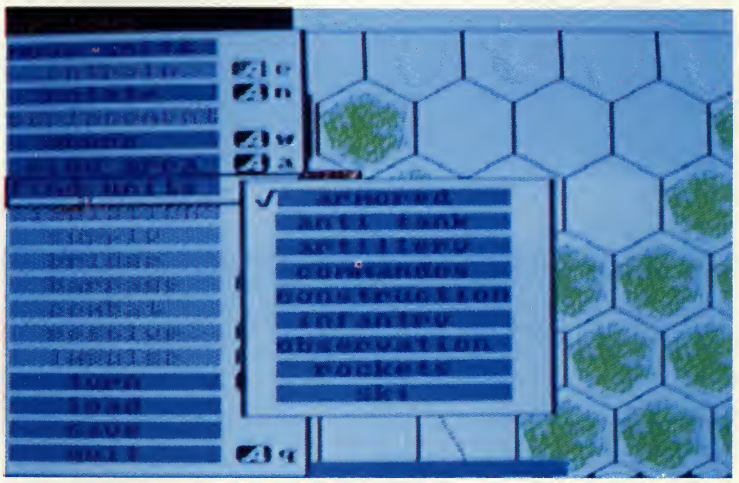
Very rarely you discover a game which displays such quality of innovation that it merits being described as revolutionary. The last (only?) computer wargame in this category was **Harpoon**.

White Death is no easier to play on the PC than on paper. Possibly it can be harder. Both versions would like to be regarded as serious and accurate simulations of a historical battle. Yet (apart from the inability to examine enemy stacks during the movement phase) there is no limited intelligence. There is no hidden movement whatsoever. The opposing player's strategic intentions and deployments, as well as his supply stocks and remaining movement points are all transparently clear.

Such failings are endemic in board wargames, because despite contrived means to get around them there are no easy solutions. On a computer version such features should be easier to implement.

Also easy to add would be a realistic revision of the oversimplified supply rules. This would correlate the quantity of supplies used to the number of troops and guns fighting.

Finally the game needs a automatic tactical system. This would allow the players to consider the operational viewpoint instead of worrying about the exact placement and commitment of individual units.



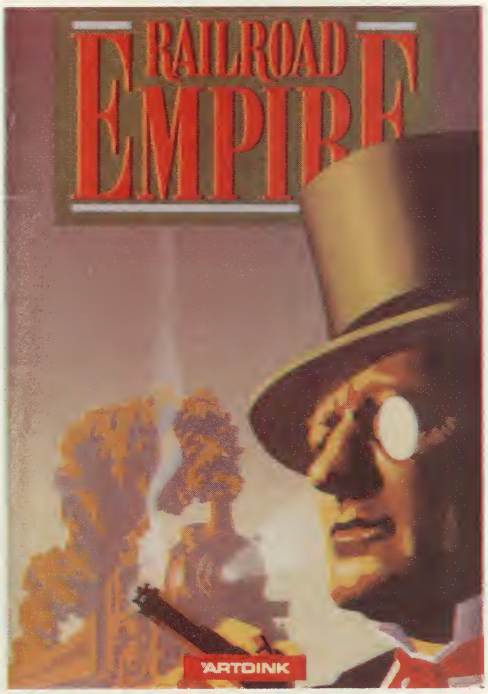
Conclusion

Computers offer wargame designers capabilities and powers not present in conventional paper wargames. In my opinion it is a pity that these abilities were not used in redesigning **White Death** for the computer. The designer may argue that he has achieved what he set out to do. **White Death** is the most accurate computer implementation of a board wargame. The computer version can recreate on my screen in 1990 exactly what I played on my tabletop in 1979. It has been done very well indeed and I am very pleased to have the ability to play **White Death** this way. This is an example of progress, or evolution. However, I shall continue to wait for the revolution. SP

RAILROAD EMPIRE

Off The Rails

by Mike Woodhouse



Designer uncredited

Published by Artdink

Price £34.99

Available on the PC

CGA, EGA

Available from specialist import shops

WHEN A good computer game turns up, reviewing it can be a problem – it's hard to stop playing and start writing. A bad game on the other hand, presents a different problem. While it's easy to turn your back on, you have to play enough to ensure you haven't missed any redeeming qualities. If it's a stinker, writing the review can be as painful as playing – you just don't want to be reminded. Sadly, this game is one of those stinkers.

The Right Track?

Why did the railroad cross the continent? To run a VIP train to the other side, of course. The idea of **Railroad Empire** is straightforward enough. You operate your 'A' train to build track towards the objective, and operate passenger trains on the existing routes to generate the revenue required to carry on building. The 'A' train is the only train which can lay track and it needs to have track sections in order to accomplish this, so freight trains are supplied to ensure a continuous flow of sections to the railhead.

Passenger trains run between the stations you build, which for your own sake had better be near towns. Towns will grow as a result of regular services running through them, so your revenue should increase gradually through the game. You have to schedule your services through the towns in order to ensure that trains don't crash into each other. This is done by setting the times at which trains will depart. Additionally, wherever a train has a choice of direction at a 'switch', the correct route must be specified.

Very Important Train

The game runs for one 'year', by the end of which the VIP train must have run successfully from its starting point to its designated destination. Track may only be laid during daylight, and schedules and routes may only be specified at night. If the VIP train, or your 'A' train is involved in an accident, you lose.

The bulk of the action takes place on an overhead map, the scale of which may be modified by the use of the 'satellite' function. The 'A' train is manipulated to the current railhead and, if in track-laying mode, lays track wherever directed.

Two scenarios, North America and the Orient Express, are provided with the game, with three more, covering Trans-Siberia, Australia and the Silk Road (to China) available as an expansion.

All the above suggests a good enough game. So why isn't it? The game is deficient in two areas: user interface, and game design. Let's face it, if you fall down on either you've got a problem. To fail on both heralds disaster.

Frankly, the user interface sucks. In this day and age of mice, windows and the like, there is simply no excuse for something as primitive as this. The game is completely keyboard driven, with no option to redefine keys, which would at least have allowed the creation of a setup which is minimally inconvenient.

On The Plate

The speed of play is variable, but even the slowest setting is too fast. The intention appears to have been to develop a strategy-based simple simulation, but the manual dexterity required to steer the 'A' train around the network turns it into a poor arcade game. The graphics are, at best, average, and the manual, such as it is, is inadequate.

In game design terms, Railroad Empire looks and feels unfinished: there simply aren't enough options there to keep the player interested. The strategy element is thin, to say the least – a specified objective in terms of pre-defined start and end points coupled with a limited range of options available with which to achieve it. Everything seems to boil down to building stations in the right place and earning enough revenue early enough to be able to afford to get the track down to allow the VIP train to make its journey.

Critical Path

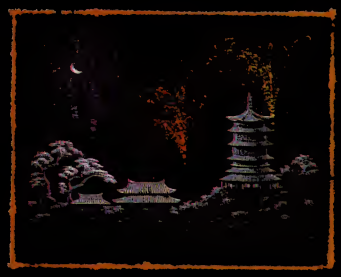
I tried to like this game, but it didn't work out. If **Railroad Tycoon** wasn't around, I would probably have been less critical, but times change and games have to change with them. The two products are in competition, like it or not, and one provides a yardstick against which the other manifestly fails to measure up. You have a choice – I think I have made it clear which one I think you should take. SP

ISHIDO

The Way of Stones

I B M P C

AFTER THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THE STONES HAVE RETURNED TO THE WORLD.



M A C I I

STRATEGY

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PATIENCE

PLAY FOR ELEGANCE, MEDITATING OVER EACH MOVE WITH THE DELIBERATION OF A MASTER.

CHANCE

SEE IF YOU CAN EMPTY THE POUCH AND DISCOVER THE SECRET OF *4-WAYS.*

INTUITION

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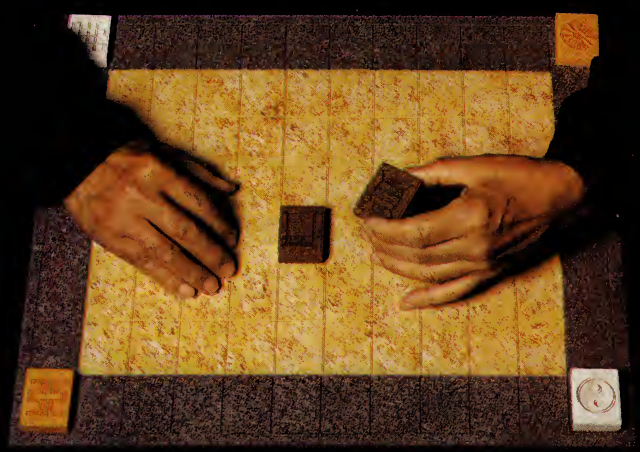
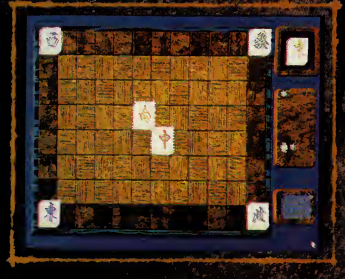


I B M P C



M A C I I

The Chinese called it *Shih Tao*, the ancient Celts called it *Runa Iuthark*, the Mayan Indians called it *Kami-a-hota*, and the Japanese called it *Ishido*. Yet, regardless of origin, when translated the names all mean one thing, *The Way of Stones*. From the first move, this ancient game and beautiful puzzle recalls the depth of chess and the simplicity of Go. Ishido will call upon your deepest powers of strategy and concentration as you match 72 stones on a board of 96 squares. As you merge with the game's many possibilities, you will have a chance to discover the heart of Ishido, and why to some, *The Way of Stones* is more than just a game.

Designed by Michael Feinberg

Available on:
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AMIGA
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Actual game screens from IBM PC/VGA and Mac II versions of the game. Other versions may vary. Game © 1990 Michael Feinberg and Software Resources International. All other materials © 1990 Accolade, Inc. All rights reserved. All product and corporate names are trademarks and registered trademarks of their respective owners.

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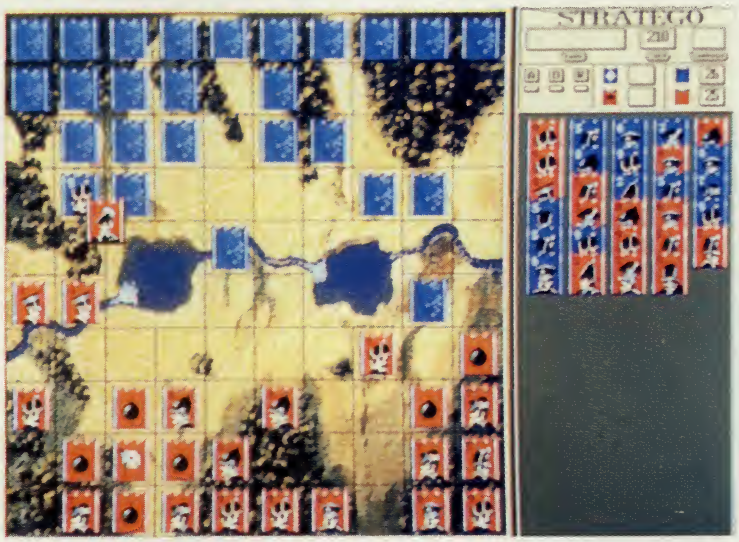
STRATEGO

Put Out More Flags

by Jonathan Turner



IN THE wonderful world of games, there are classics and classics. **Stratego** is both, and then some. I am sure that I am not alone when I say that **Stratego** was my bridge from the abstract terrain of **Chess** and **Draughts** to the hexagon-ridden mapsheets of SPI and Avalon Hill. For better or for worse, **Stratego** made me into a spielfreak.

It was therefore with great anticipation that I loaded the new computer version of this seminal document from my gaming past onto my hard disk, eager to re-enter the world of spies and field-marshals. First impressions of the computer version were very promising indeed, at least if you are lucky enough to have VGA graphics. In EGA the pieces are a touch blurry and difficult to tell apart.

Grid Manoeuvres

For readers who have never played **Stratego**, the game is a simple one. Each player has forty pieces, ranging from field-marshal right down to the lowly scout. Higher value pieces take lower value ones on a 10x10 square grid, the object being to take your opponent's flag, which is one of eight unvalued pieces. The other unvalued pieces are: one spy who is taken by everything, but may capture the opponent's field-marshal, and six mines which blow up anything that attacks them, and can only be defused by miners (who are weaker than every other piece except scouts and spies). Players can only see their own pieces, so there is an element of Pelmanism about the game as well as finer points of chess-like strategy.

Jump In A Lake

Before the game starts, pieces must be placed in the four rows at your end of the board. This can be done 'manually' by dragging the pieces one by one to the appropriate square. Alternatively, one of the 13 supplied set-ups can be chosen for a quick game start. These reflect different strategies; some are offensive and others defensive in nature. Player set-ups can be saved, avoiding the drudge of placement in subsequent games.

Each turn a player moves one piece. Movement is restricted to one square, except in the case of the scouts, which may move any number of available open squares, subject to the movement restrictions. Pieces may move forward, backward or sideways – but not diagonally. Nor is it possible to more on to, or jump over either of the 'lakes' in the centre of the board.

Attacks can be made when an enemy piece is adjacent, by simply moving your piece on to the enemy occupied square, at which point both pieces are revealed.

There are three different board settings: Original, which is self explanatory; Classic, which seems to be the 'carved from the living rock' effect; and Modern, which has what look like swimming pools instead of lakes in the middle of it. There are also similar settings for the pieces: Original, Wooden and Stone.

Battle Options

The game features several optional rules: 'aggressor advantage', which means that the attacker wins in the case of a tie instead of the normal mutual destruction; 'silent defense', which means that the defender is not revealed in the case of an unsuccessful attack; and 'rescue', a chess-like rule which allows the reintroduction of a captured piece when one of your units reaches the opponent's end of the board. The game can be played on five different levels, from Sergeant at the lowest, to Marshal at the highest.

The variety of options is useful, and changes the strategy of play somewhat. However, the main problem with the game is the ease with which it can be beaten, in this particular case at the top level on the first attempt. Granted I am an experienced player, but even so the 'artificial intelligence' does not seem that hot. This makes the decision not to include a two player option all the more regrettable. It can only be assumed that this was excluded because of the need for secrecy, though this would have been no more of a problem than it is in most multi-player games. As it stands, **Stratego** can be recommended to inexperienced players, or those looking for a mild strategic challenge. Experts may find it too much of an easy touch. SP

Designed by
Ken McLeod

Published by
Accolade

Price £29.99

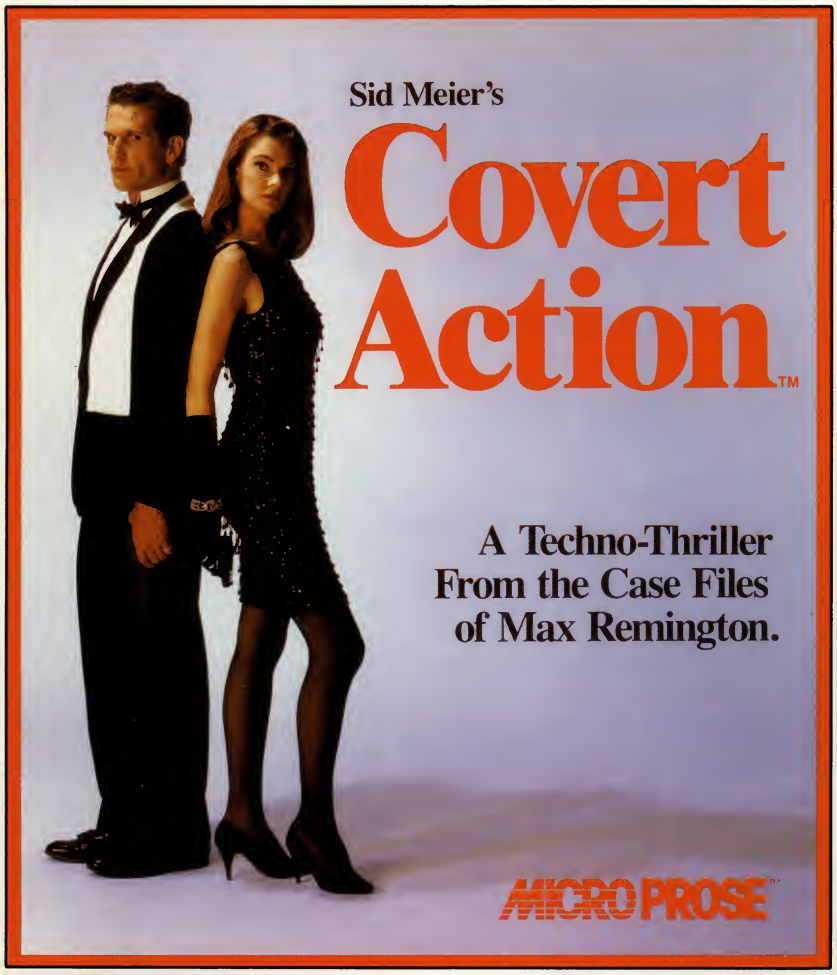
Available on the PC only

CGA, EGA, VGA (16 colour Hi-Res)

Tandy, CMS, AdLib and MT32 soundboards supported

Minimum 512K required (640 for VGA)

Mouse, keyboard, joystick interfaces



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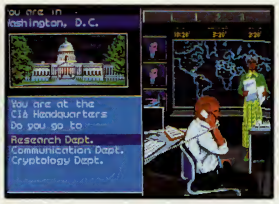

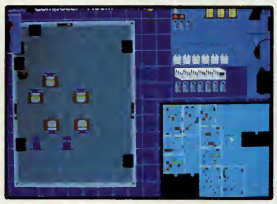

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THE FINAL CONFLICT

Armageddon Days

by Mike Woodhouse

REAL TIME global warfare. Sounds like everybody's worst nightmare, doesn't it? Well, that's what **The Final Conflict** sets out to portray. It's not too gory, though, as I shall explain.

Picture yourself in one of a number of global situations where one country or group of countries is trying to face down another by dint of diplomacy, threats and, if necessary, outright violence. You may recall the classic game, **Balance of Power**, which attempted a similar sort of thing. **The Final Conflict** has more to do with what happened *after* the button got pushed. It presents a limited nuclear conflict (rather than 'everybody nuke everybody else,' which frankly wouldn't be much use for more than a pretty graphic demo) coupled with a very high-level conventional warfare option.

Saddam Fine Weapons

Players start with one or more countries under their control, depending on the scenario chosen (there are five, within each of which you may play either side, ranging from East vs West through the Middle East to the Falklands). Orders are then given to build infantry, tanks, ships, spies and missiles in such a way that their resources are best used and they produce what you most need at the moment. To take them in reverse order, missiles are launched at enemy countries' resources, which are discovered by spies. Having the majority of ships in a sea space allows you to move infantry and tanks across that space. Moving infantry and tanks into a country not owned by you causes a battle to start. If your forces are the only ones left in the country at the end, then the ownership of the country passes to you. You have the option to play until either the enemy is defeated (controls no countries) or you have taken over the entire world.

Real Time Drama

The whole game occurs in real time: the computer is acting while you're sitting and thinking (although there is a 'pause' facility, thank goodness, and the computer's thinking speed can be altered at the start of the game). Standing orders for countries cannot be placed, so you have to constantly check for countries which have replenished their resource levels to a point where something useful may be built. Each country can only support a certain number of armed forces, so be careful that a planned build-up of forces doesn't end in catastrophe as they all starve!

When missiles are launched, their progress can be tracked on a separate screen. An alarm starts to sound when they are within 10 seconds of arrival, and at five seconds to impact, defences can be enabled. This entails playing a short arcade game of the **Missile Command** variety to save whatever it is that the enemy is trying to destroy. This is quite a neat piece of work, though it does seem a little out of keeping with the rest of the game (its use is optional).

The manual is a little thin at eight pages, and though **The Final Conflict** is a relatively simple game, I was a little annoyed that some features were not explained adequately, such as the need for a production facility of the correct type to be present before a unit of that type may be built. The program itself falls down here, by the way, allowing you to waste natural resources like nobody's business by ordering tanks or ships when no facilities exist to build them.

The Final Conflict is an introductory strategic combat game, like an extended version of **Risk**. It lacks the complexity which would present a challenge to an experienced computer gamer – I won each scenario I tried within an hour. For all that, it's not a bad little game, and I would suggest that it could make a good present for someone you want to introduce to computer strategy games. SP

Designed by
Dave Kirby

Published by
Impressions

Price £24.99

Available for the ST
and Amiga

STRATEGY REVIEWS NEXT ISSUE

POWERMONGER

BETRAYAL

LIGHTSPEED

SHANGHAI II

BLITZKRIEG AT THE ARDENNES

HIDDEN AGENDA

Gringos Go Home

by Brian Walker

FROM BEING a source of cheap goods for the *gringos*, South America has now become the catalyst for a series of cheap games. Once seen as the land of a thousand dances, it is now depicted as a continent rife with drug barons and subversion, making it an ideal target for Pentagon hardware and software sims.

Chez Guevara

Attempting to right a million wrongs comes **Hidden Agenda** from Springboard Software. The country it is set in is fictionalised, though the events depicted therein bear a distinct resemblance to Nicaragua, post Somoza.

Whichever country it is, it is one in which 'Max Remington', from Microprose's **Covert Action**, would feel right at home. The despotic dictator, Farsante, has just been overthrown in a popular revolution. However, the economy is in ruins, the peasants want justice, and the landowners are worried. Step forward El Presidente. He has three years (if he lasts that long) in which to unite the country.

First, he must select an agenda, and then a cabinet. Does he choose the hard line lefties who all sound like they studied at the Dave Spart School of English? Or does he go for the moderate wimps who try to be all things to all men? Everyone will give him advice, but then advice is cheap in this game. Decisions, though, come at a cost. A turn consists of nine 'encounters' (or decisions) per season. Mostly these are interviews with Ministers during which policy decisions on specific issues (choice of three) must be made. Each choice counts against the nine.

Alternatively the views of others, from the US Ambassador to a coffee grower, can be sought on how to manage the country. This is essential, in fact, if a rounded view of the country's problems is to be obtained. The 'hidden agenda' of the title refers to the fact that some of the characters will say one thing, but are in fact dancing to a different tune altogether. Success, or mere survival, depends on being able to appease conflicting factions.

The only 'chrome' in the game is in the form of the press reports – *El Independente* (no relation) is *not* on the side of *El Presidente* – and a few charts. Included in the package is a rather nice map, but this does not appear to play any part in the game.

Sergio Espinosa Castaneda
Encountering: Sergio Espinosa Castaneda
Coffee-producing estate in Trinidad Province formerly owned by brother-in-law of dictator Julio Farsante.
Continue This Encounter
See Bio
Have Another Encounter
Your Agriculture Minister will advise you during this encounter.
?

The user manuals are high quality productions, indeed the overall presentation is flawless. The graphics are in high res black and white, and while this cleverly adds an element of social realism to the proceedings, it also compounds one of the game's main problems: it is rather dull. Much of this stems from the lack of a guiding dynamic. You only really discover the effect of your policies at game end. The interface is keyboard and while this works okay, a mouse would have been better. Despite the apparent complexity of the subject matter, **Hidden Agenda** is a very easy game to get into. Within minutes of booting you can be guiding your country on the road to ruin.

Left Turn

The manual's party line is: 'There is no right or wrong way to play this game'. True enough. Perhaps that is why it plays more like a piece of educational software than anything resembling entertainment. Maybe that's the idea, in which case it works fine and can be thoroughly recommended to all the guilty liberals in our midst.

That the game is well programmed is not in doubt, but it's all so solemn. Just because something is political does not mean it can't be funny – look at Dan Quayle!

The most interesting part of the program is the post mortem when performance in office is assessed – 'The Verdict of History' as it is dubbed. This consists of a long and personalised report of the effect the President's policies had on the country. So detailed is it, that it almost made what went before seem worthwhile. Almost.

Unfortunately, though, the verdict of history cannot be merged into the verdict of posterity. A print option exists, but you can only print out a list of your meetings, and not the thing that's really worth printing: history's verdict. Nor is it possible to save it. This is a remarkable oversight. One of the strengths of **Hidden Agenda** is that every game is different, but without anything to refer back to it's impossible to compare relative performances.

For the record, the verdict of history on the reign of Presidente Walker was that his extreme left wing agenda led the country into 'anarchy and turmoil'. He was assassinated in a *coup d'etat* after two years in office. That's gratitude for you. SP

Designed by
Jim Gasperini

Published by
Springboard Software

Price £34.99

Available for the PC from specialist import shops

Black and white graphics only though colour graphics card required

STRATEGY PLUS

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MURDERS IN SPACE

Ten Little Astronauts

by John Scott

JUNE 30, 2005. It all started with the murder attempt on the Commander. It's because of his report that an investigator has to go to the space station and check out what's going on. This afternoon he'll be up there, and have to leave again by 11am tomorrow, so he'll have to work fast.

In **Murders in Space** you play the part of the investigator who tries to solve the mystery of the murder attempt – can it really be just because the other six crew members are so very tired of asparagus soup at every meal? There's definitely something strange going on here. Every last one of the international crew seem to have some secrets that they want to keep hidden. What about Kamakura, who had a kamikaze grandfather? Or Boronova, who keeps locking herself away from everyone else?

As you play the game you'll soon discover that the Commander's real problem is paranoia – the murder enquiry is a waste of your time. Then one by one, the crew start to die...

I've never come across anything quite like **Murders in Space** before. The game consists mainly of moving around the nine locations of the space station (ten, if you decide to spacewalk), and questioning the crew. It's mostly mouse driven – to speak to someone, click on their picture in the display of the current location, then on your own picture to determine what exactly can be said to them. All comments and questions are pre-programmed, but you can sometimes cycle through a few choices and so avoid saying the wrong thing. In addition to these speech bubbles, thought bubbles can also be called up which suggest possible courses of action, and provide an on-going check list of how many secrets have been solved so far. Most of these pre-programmed conversations will happen regardless of whether you do any snooping around the ship or not, but the more crucial dialogue is only available once some evidence has been garnered, for example by having a search through the lockers.

The clock is continually ticking away, and at the end of each hour a new section of the game loads, the crew members move to new tasks, and fresh dialogue becomes possible. If you feel that you've followed all the possibilities after the first five minutes of the hour, then it's possible to advance the clock to speed progress. In practice, the advisability of this is dubious – things can happen at odd moments, such as 7:30, and advancing from 7:15 to 8:00 might lead to something being missed. In addition to finding the criminal(s?) and keeping the crew alive, there are certain other tasks to be mastered. The sexy EVA specialist Ornella Alvisi is frozen in a cryogenic chamber, and will have to be defrosted; the robot arm, used to mix chemicals, will have to be successfully manipulated; the intricacies of the on-board telescope must be mastered; very importantly, the password each crew member uses on the computer's mail box/memo pad must be obtained; you'll even have to take a trip or two outside the ship – practice on the simulator in the control module first! Most of all, you will need to exercise the little grey cells, for **Murders in Space** is tough!

On top of all this, there is a 30 question questionnaire to be answered. It's worth looking at this carefully at an early stage, as some of the questions suggest leads to follow.

Included with the package is what appears to be a container of 'Space Gravy' soup. As I was opening this a couple of beans fell out, and I thought for one awful moment that they were providing real soup as part of the deal! Nope. It contains clues, some of which are vital (others are useless). A booklet of clues showing the things you find in various locations is also provided.

I found this game totally absorbing – I played it for so long that it seemed that this review would never be written. But there are a few major problems. One is the difficulty factor – there are areas of this game that no one is *ever* going to solve without outside help.

Another problem is that, on the Amiga at least, the keyboard map is a bit off. In one of the questionnaire answers, I couldn't make any key give me the '/' which was part of the answer.

The nature of the game dictates that the plot line is very linear, with a limited choice of actions, many of which must be carried out in the correct order. I think that this is fair enough, given the scenario, but some people might find it a bit restrictive. Having said that, this is one of those programs that keeps you coming back for one more try. Perhaps it's like a hole in a tooth – annoying, painful, and you know that you should leave it alone, but you just keep coming back to it! SP

Designed by
Bertrand Brocard

Published by
Infogrames

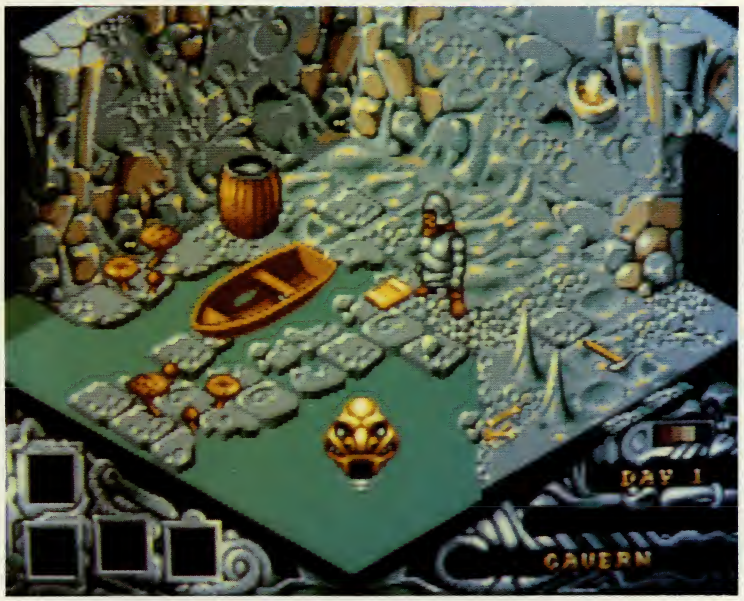
Price £24.99

Available for the Amiga and the ST
Reviewed on the Amiga

CADAVER

The Body Double

by Maurice Thomas



BACK IN the days of Yore, when I was a lad and 32K was considered a respectable amount of memory for a young computer to be having, there lived a game called **Knight Lore**. It was a brave young game, bringing the world of two and a half dimensional animation to the BBC micro. It involved stalking around a castle, generally avoiding traps and beasties, and trying not to turn into a werewolf in the middle of combat.

I loved that little game. We lived together, poor though we were, for many a year. Finally though, we were split up by the hand of progress. I moved in with a PC compatible and my game left me forever, or so I thought. But now, after all the long years of absence during which the heart grow fonder, I have been forgiven my fickleness. My little game has come home.

Night Law

Cadaver is, as the manual says, a '3D arcade adventure', in which you play Karadoc the dwarf. He is a sturdy, no-nonsense sort of chap, who lusts for gold, diamonds, and all other consumer durables. He is a Tolkien dwarf through and through, from the tip of his pointy beard to his mighty thews. Equipped with a suit of armour and a rucksack the size of a small Landrover, he ventures forth into the world of **Cadaver**, battle-hardened and inured to the rigours of violent plundering. However, he is up against his mightiest foe yet in the shape of Dianos the Necromancer.

Dianos has ruled the castle he intends to plunder for the last two years; time which he has used to do unspeakable things to the livestock of the place. When you consider that the natural livestock of this world includes trolls and dragons, Dianos' alternatives don't really bear thinking about. Dianos is another character straight out of Tolkien, though his ambitions aren't quite as far-reaching as Sauron's, content as he is to 'abduct people from surrounding villages to satisfy his black practices.' Nasty, huh?

Balrog Boogie

Playing the game is tricky at first. It is mostly joystick controlled, but as the fire button can be used for jumping, casting spells, using weapons or throwing stuff, you can easily find yourself doing odd things at crisis points. Since jumping up and down at a Balrog is not renowned for its effectiveness, I'd suggest a thorough mastering of the controls before beginning play.

Exploring is made easy by the provision of a handy map. This builds itself as a background task while you are moving about, and you refer to it by pressing one of the function keys. It is not such a revolutionary idea, but it removes completely the boring task of mapping from the game, and as such I thoroughly applaud it.

The best feature from a utility point of view is the backpack. This can be accessed at any time, and by moving through the icons you can discover exactly what you are carrying, and what each thing does. If you want to get something from your pack you simply hit the fire button while in the backpack screen, and then transfer the item to your hand. If you are holding anything at the time it is automatically put away; furthermore, another readout will itemise anything you happen to be holding at the time. Therefore, you are unlikely to try to knock down walls with pointed sticks or skewer dragons with loaves of bread.

Silky Smooth

Picking up and examining things couldn't be easier. When you touch something, or stand by it, a set of small icons come up presenting your options regarding the item. These can be anything from eat, fire or pick up, to drag across the room, examine or give (bread to a dying man, for example). Again the controls in this area take a little mastering, but having done so the functions are silky smooth.

The game is visually excellent, using light and shade to create gloomy, dripping stone passageways, with bits of bone and stuff for scenery, as well as the odd alarming pair of eyes peeking out at you from tiny cracks in the walls. The sound effects are complementary to the game and not overpowering; as such, they add to the atmosphere, and moreover sound pretty real (though I don't really have much idea of what a skeleton being dragged across granite sounds like).

I will admit that for me it took a great effort of will to play the game having discovered from the manual that the two main characters were so derivative of Tolkien. However, I am very glad that I made the effort, especially since my game of yesteryear is in some ways recreated. The Middle Earth aspect appears nowhere more than in the manual, and I can assure you that there isn't a hobbit in sight. It is a well executed, intriguing and above all long lasting game that I thoroughly recommend. SP

Designed by
The Bitmap Brothers

Published by
Mirrorsoft

Price £24.99

Available on all formats
Reviewed on the Amiga

SPACE 1889

Lie Back And Think Of Earth

by Ian Marsh

GAMES Designers' Workshop had a fantastic idea when it decided to launch Victorian society into space. The idea of English gentlemen doing battle with Johnny Martian and the Hun over the red planet, combined with the science fiction ideas of Jules Verne and HG Wells, was clearly a winning idea for a pencil-and-paper role-playing game.

Unfortunately, Paragon Software has closely followed GDW's rule book in its computerised version of **Space 1889**. The background and introduction are enthralling, but the details about character generation, equipment and technology can appeal only to physics students. The brilliance of the game has been dulled by pedantic adherence to detail.

The adventure starts in a London museum where, as the leader of a party of five adventurers, the player overhears a conversation between two men about a German expedition to unearth the treasures of King Tutankhamen's tomb. By variously talking to and bribing half a dozen people across the world, it is possible to pick up clues to attain this objective. Along the way, plenty of other people will provide clues for further adventures or information to further the group's fortunes.

Much of the time, however, the people encountered are commoners, mere time-wasters that the player must infuriatingly stop and talk to in order to have any chance of progressing in the adventure. The advantage of pencil-and-paper role-playing games is that such pointless encounters need never take place or can be improvised by a referee to help or mislead the players.

The playing screen could almost have been designed to confuse: there is too much information in too many windows. One window displays the tiny character sprite and the surrounding terrain, a second shows items that the character may want to use, study or pick up, the third shows the party leader and his main statistics, a fourth is for dialogue and a fifth contains all the commands that the player needs to use.

The great disadvantage of this layout is that the terrain presented to the player occupies about one quarter of the available space. Such a small display makes it difficult to see tiny objects, let alone work out what the various graphics are intended to represent.

Space 1889 provides the option of using five pre-generated characters or creating new ones for the adventure. A broad range of skills and social levels are needed to create a party that can progress through the adventure: high social levels are useful to provide wealth, whereas certain careers available to poorer people provide valuable skills.

All characters are devoid of real colour. The only thing that distinguishes one character from another is the graphic chosen for their face: none are generated with personalities. The characters are merely mechanical tools that the player uses to complete the adventure. **Space 1889**, however, at least allows specialist characters to shine: it is essential to allow an expert to tackle tasks in the game. Role-playing games all too often have every player making attempts at each task until someone succeeds.

The cramped screen isn't helped by the use of tightly spaced capital letters to display written information. Descriptions are prolix, and tightly crafted descriptions have been forced out by sub-Lovecraftian prose that sticks in the throat like organically produced peanut butter.

Wandering around the **Space 1889** world reveals many mysteries. Bengal tigers roam the countryside around London; England has become physically linked to the Continent; and Egypt is but a few short days' stroll from Britain's capital. There are nice touches, however: adventurers can choose to travel by zeppelin, horse or boat from the conveniently placed harbours, and tribes of Indians still threaten the fair civilisation of America. But travelling is one thing that can be dispensed with in a paper-and-pencil role-playing game because it is tedious: the computer version of **Space 1889** forces the player to do it.

The computer game makes extensive use of scenarios and characters from the original. Key non-player characters loiter in bars to spill the beans on some innovative process or great discovery. It is so frustrating, however, to feel that everyone needs to be talked to just in case they have vital information.

Fights are the one time when the screen zooms in on the action. All the members of the party are shown on screen as well as their opponents and have the freedom to act as individuals. Would that the system worked: combat seems to happen at the whim of the program and the instructions on gaining control of characters often don't seem to work.

Computer role-playing games are ideal for hiding the clumsy, intrusive mechanics of their pencil-and-paper forebears, but **Space 1889** makes little attempt to do so and in some cases makes things worse. There is undoubtedly a lot to discover and enjoy in the game, but it will take steady and determined play to get beyond King Tut's tomb. SP

Designed by
Steve Suhy, Don Wuenschell and FJ Lennon

Published by
Paragon Software

Available for all formats
Reviewed on the PC

CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy

Covox soundboard supported

Space 1889 should be available in the UK in February

FOUNTAIN OF DREAMS

Meltdown In Miami

by Theo Clarke

NUCLEAR war has struck America. The bombs caused earthquakes that left Florida as an island. The island itself was hit by neutron and chemical weapons so there is little residual radiation. This is thought to be the only surviving bastion of American humanity.

Elsewhere on the continent there are savage mutants, but even now, some fifty years after the war, a society of city states survives in Florida. Miami itself still exists but is torn by strife between such bizarre groups as the DeSoto clan, the Obeah Orders and the Bahia Mafia. The paramilitary Miami Police try to establish a kind of order.

These are not the only groups: the Beachcombers are a disorganised rabble who live in Miami; the sinister Killer Clowns prowl the jungles using their unique martial art Slap-Fu (based on circus slapstick).

Mutant Ninja Fauna

If the humans seem bad enough, the mutated fauna is even worse and the mutations have started spreading faster. Through this horrific landscape wander small gangs of adventurers. **Fountain of Dreams** is about such a band. Starting in a small settlement just north of Miami a group of up to three heroes have decided to clean up the island. It is rumoured that the eponymous fountain is the source of Dream water, a reagent that cures all diseases and mutations. But no one knows its location.

The game is about a search for the Fountain of Dreams so that the healing waters can be used to purge the island of its ills.

Play starts by setting up the members of the group. A profession is chosen for each character and the system generates certain attribute scores and skills in the usual way. The player then allocates a number of bonus points to customise each character.

Time After Time

Entering the game for the first time opens a screen displaying a map that is very obviously based upon a squared grid. The initial location is a small enclosure around which the group can be moved by means of the cursor keys. There is a clock in one corner of the screen and time progresses with each movement. As time passes the environment changes; the stores close at nightfall, for instance.

Moving out of the enclosure causes the scale to change and the level of detail is dramatically reduced, but the map format remains the same. Similarly, moving out of the wilderness into another settlement restores the original level of detail.

Encounters with hostile entities always lead to combat, but in most cases it is possible to avoid the encounter before combat begins. Not all creatures are hostile and approachable characters will speak to the adventurers and end their statements with multiple choice questions: 'Hi! I'm Fred. Don't take any wooden nickels. Do you want to learn about a) coinage; b) trees?' Friendly characters may also offer services and in some cases they will be prepared to join the band.

Combat is tactical but swift. The display shows the enemy and prompts for the next action by each adventurer in turn. Essentially the character can choose to run away, fight with their active weapon, change to another weapon or use some other skill. The combatants take damage until they drop and can die if they do not receive medical attention.

Experienced computer role-players may feel that there is no new technique here. This is true. Technically the game is well within the bounds of existing games but it does have a unique feel. The post-holocaust environment is a well-worn concept but this wry interpretation is beguiling and the cumulative effect of the smiles arising from small jokes, such as Slap-Fu, make for an entertainingly distinctive game.

Hard To Save

The game does have one technically unusual feature, however. All saves are made to the same place, overwriting the installed version of the game. Thus, it is not possible to restore an earlier phase of the game. Restarting the game returns the player to the latest saved position. Indeed, if every member of the party is killed, the game restarts with all party members restored to life and standing at their last saved location. The game automatically saves the position when the party moves from one 'location' to another so the first automatic save occurs when the party leaves the home enclosure.

The inflexible saving is irksome, but it is not sufficient to mar the quiet pleasure that this quirky, but challenging, game can afford the experienced role-player. SP

Designed by
Dave Albert and Banjo Bob Hardy

Published by
Electronic Arts

Price £24.99

Available for PC
Reviewed on the PC

EGA, VGA, MCGA and Hercules

PC Speaker

FOUROBSERVATIONS

by Brian Moriarty

THE FOLLOWING paragraphs are drawn from notes I made during the production of **Loom**. Some of the material appears to be self-contradictory. Nearly all of it is self-serving. Opposing viewpoints are welcome but unnecessary.

1. Nobody buys adventure games for their stories.

People buy adventure games because they like to solve puzzles, explore fun places, and show off their computers. They do not buy adventure games for their stories. Why? Because there are other, much cheaper media capable of telling much better stories – and all the best storytellers work in those other media.

Generality and flexible interaction are basic requirements of traditional computer design. Manipulation and linear causality are basic requirements of effective storytelling. These requirements are mutually exclusive. That's why nobody has ever told a really *good* story in a really *good* adventure game.

It's certainly possible to create a rich, interesting context for an adventure game. But calling this context a story is like designing a stage set and calling it a play. Nevertheless, many designers persist in referring to their products as 'Story games' and styling themselves as 'Storytellers'. This self-indulgence is probably harmless, as long as we never forget that our real job is the creation of puzzles, environments and pictures. (I'm as guilty of such self-indulgence as anybody. In fact, my old Infocom business card specified my job title as Storyteller).

2. Most people who buy adventure games never finish them.

In fact, many never even get half way through. Everybody in the industry knows this. Yet few acknowledge the seriousness of the creative and economic implications.

Suppose the average adventure game ships on eight disks. That means the majority of people who buy the game will never see more than four or five disks worth of material. Yet the second half of the game costs just as much to create as the first half. Sometimes more if you've got a big finale.

Less than 50% of the money, time and effort we put into our games is being appreciated by most of our customers. This is not a good way to do business.

In **Loom**, I wanted everybody who bought the game to enjoy every byte I and my team had created for them. Why? because...

3. People like adventure games they can finish.

In its heyday, Infocom's *New Zork Times* newsletter had a circulation of over 150 000. The marketing department used *The Times* to conduct consumer surveys. These yielded lots of interesting statistics.

One such survey included two questions: 'What are your favourite adventure games?' and 'Which games have you actually finished?' A remarkably high correlation was noted between the games people liked and the ones they had finished.

I wanted people to like **Loom**. Not just the fanatic hobbyists who regularly invest tens or even hundreds of hours in a single game. I mean *real* people, working adults with limited leisure time and lots of attractive ways to spend it. So, from its inception, **Loom** was designed to be finished.

Lucasfilm also conducts surveys. We telephoned 200 people who returned **Loom** registration cards in the month of June 1990, and asked them what they thought of the game. Those who were disappointed with **Loom** usually said they liked the game well enough, but wished there was more of it. The ones who were satisfied with **Loom** often expressed delight that they were able to complete it, and either did not notice or were willing to forgive its relative brevity. Those same people are clamouring for a sequel.

4. The Holy Grail may not be Interactive.

The first movies were event recordings. Popular film consisted of trains pulling into stations, waves crashing on beaches, people sneezing or getting their heads cut off. This initial lack of sophistication is quite understandable, since event recording is the most obvious way to use a movie camera. It was years before filmmakers realised that cinema could be used to tell stories, to educate, to persuade.

Interactivity is the most obvious way to use computers in entertainment. Unfortunately, some people in our industry have embraced interactivity as the *sine qua non* of computer games. They claim it is the only thing that sets computer games apart from other entertainment media.

It's hard to believe that a fast moving, high technology medium barely ten years old has already discovered its ultimate form of expression. It is, in fact, highly unlikely that we have found all the ways computers may effectively be applied to entertainment. We probably haven't even discovered the best ways yet.

In **Loom**, I experimented with the idea that emphasising storytelling at the expense of interactivity might make adventure games more accessible to the general public. The strong reaction to the product, both positive and negative, together with its respectable sales record in a slow summer, suggest that there may be a market for similarly limited interaction software out there, waiting to be tapped.

Interactivity is a powerful capability that should be exploited when appropriate. But let's not pursue it so doggedly that we fail to notice other possibilities. SP

Brian Moriarty is the author of three Infocom prose adventures, Wishbringer (1985), Trinity (1986) and Beyond Zork (1987). His first graphic adventure, Loom, was published in June '90 by Lucasfilm Games. He is currently designing educational software for Lucasfilm Learning.

This article originally appeared in the *Journal of Computer Game Design*, and is reprinted with permission.

CLUED UP

by Professor Plum

MURDERS INSPACE

THIS GAME *(reviewed page 23)* is one of the most difficult adventures yet released. So this issue's tips are all devoted to helping you crack the devious plot.

HOW TO ARRIVE BEFORE 3:00 PM

As soon as the game loads take manual control of the docking procedure. This will get you there an hour early.

HOW TO DEFROST ALVISI

Arrive at the Station before 3:00pm. Go to the Lab, set the CLISS machine for 'Internal/Program' and set the wake up time for 01. She will leave the machine at 1:00am.

FOR ALL WHO CANNOT DO HEXADECIMAL ARITHMETIC

C0FFEE is a hexadecimal number which, translated to the base ten, is 12648430. This will help you find the commander's favourite drink.

FOR ALL NON-ASTRONOMERS

The double star between Deneb, Vega and Altair is ALBIREO.

TO FIND ANTIDOTES FOR THE CREW

Do an medical analysis of Schmidt at the earliest possible moment (CLISS 'External/Diagnosis', then 'Transmit'). Transmit the details to Earth at once. This must be done before the COPS system fails. Go EVA as soon after this as possible, and repair the aerial with the laser. When a reply from Earth arrives, study it carefully and work out from it how to prepare customised antidotes for each crew member.

WHAT'S ON THE VIDEOTAPE?

Alvisi will have some answers when she comes out of the shower.

TO SAVE CONNOLY

Find a first aid kit and have it ready.

HOW NOT TO GET TOASTED

Anytime after Connoly's 'accident' use the telescope on 'scan' mode. Modify the colours to see something interesting (you can practice on 'California' first). Then take a snapshot and show it to the crew.

TO FIND HIGGINS' PASSWORD

Search his overalls (when he's not wearing them).

TO SAVE KAMAKURA

As soon as you see that a fuse is missing, find it and replace it.

TO SEARCH KAMAKURA

Catch him off guard, then search 'very carefully'.

HOW DOES THE TELESCOPE WORK?

Talk to Connoly in the lab in the early hours and he'll give you a complete rundown. SP

ADVENTURE REVIEWS NEXT ISSUE

SPELLCASTING 101

PRINCE OF PERSIA

B.A.T

PLUS

WE LIKE...

Spellcasting 101 (PC)

Secret of Monkey Island (PC)

The Final Battle (Amiga,ST)

Legend of Faerghail (All)

Wonderland (PCI)

1990 A WALKTHRU

BY BRIAN WALKER

STRATEGY

While the overall quality of strategy games improved considerably, the problem of finding a good computer opponent remained. This was not only apparent in abstract games such as **Battle Chess II** and **Stratego**, but also in such diversions as **Risk** and **The Final Conflict**. One answer to this dilemma is to opt for a game which offers a human opponent as well as a born out of a chip.

Whoever, or whatever you played against, **Full Metal Planet** from Infogrames offered full value for money. This was one of the year's best strategy games and a fine implementation of the board-game. The two Koei games, due to be released by Infogrames in January, should add lustre to what is becoming an illustrious catalogue.

Space was more popular than ever and offered something for everybody, though not necessarily in one package. For that you'd need the graphics of **Supremacy**, the depth of **Imperium**, and the humour of **Star Control.**

One of the biggest disappointments was **Global Dilemma** from Chris Crawford. Perhaps this was because there seemed to be more omissions than inclusions. It would have taken quite a lot though, to beat **Railroad Tycoon**. Not only our strategy game of the year, but our *game* of the year. Apart from being a superb simulation of the subject matter, it also set a new standard for economic games. Amiga and ST owners have a treat in store when the game becomes available on these formats in May.

WARGAMES

Despite, or maybe because of, the decline of the board wargame, computer wargames flourished as never before. Despite the volume, however, innovation was still at a premium as most designers opted for straight conversions of their aforementioned ancestors. The exception to this was **Second Front**; a masterly example of original design from Gary Grigsby and SSI, which took advantage of the computer's unique facilities.

If you preferred the more traditional approach then **Blitzkrieg at the Ardennes** and **White Death** on the Internecine label were as good as any. In the reprise section, would you please give a warm welcome back to **The Ancient Art of War** and its cousin, **The Ancient Art of War at Sea**, both now available in EGA, though sadly in no other format than PC.

A real surprise was **Team Yankee** from Empire Simulations. This would be unlikely to appeal to the hard core, but it provided an excellent introduction to the genre for beginners. After all, everybody's got to start somewhere.

ADVENTURE

A great year for adventurers everywhere. Especially if you happened to own a stonking 386 PC with a few meg of RAM. Sierra has always been the leader in this field, but Lucasfilm came on strong with the wondrous **Secret of Monkey Island**. Sierra did not exactly sit on its laurels – **Colonel's Bequest** was quite a departure, as was **Codename: Iceman**.

The Americans did not have it all their own way, though. Delphine saw to that. This excellent French company looked to have perfected its 'Cinémathique' system with **Operation Stealth**, look out for **Cruise for a Corpse** soon. In a more traditional mould, **Drakkhen** from Infogrames offered a real challenge and the graphical quality we have come to expect from the French. On the revival front, how nice it is to be able to say 'Hi' again to those foxy ladies, the **Leather Goddesses of Phobos** and their pals – hitchhiking their way across the galaxy and into our consciousness once more. Another pleasant surprise was the emergence of Accolade into this field with **Search for the King** and **Altered Destiny**. Both featured highly original storylines and were very, very, tough.

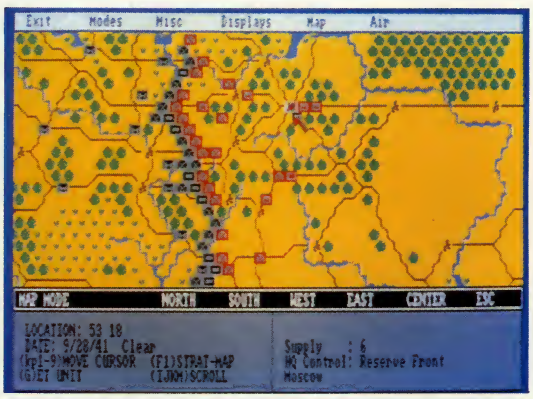
Nobody could accuse this magazine of being chauvinistic, but it's a pleasure to be able to find one game from the UK at least, which was more than equal to anything the rest of the world could offer. **Wonderland** from Virgin Mastertronic is destined to be a classic of its kind. Witty, charming, and of course, a wonderful storyline, it proved that the text adventure is not dead after all. It just needed a few graphics!

ROLE-PLAYING

With everything from trivia games to tiddlywinks claiming to be a 'role-playing' game, surely this was the most abused term of the year? If any genre is in need

Continued, page 32

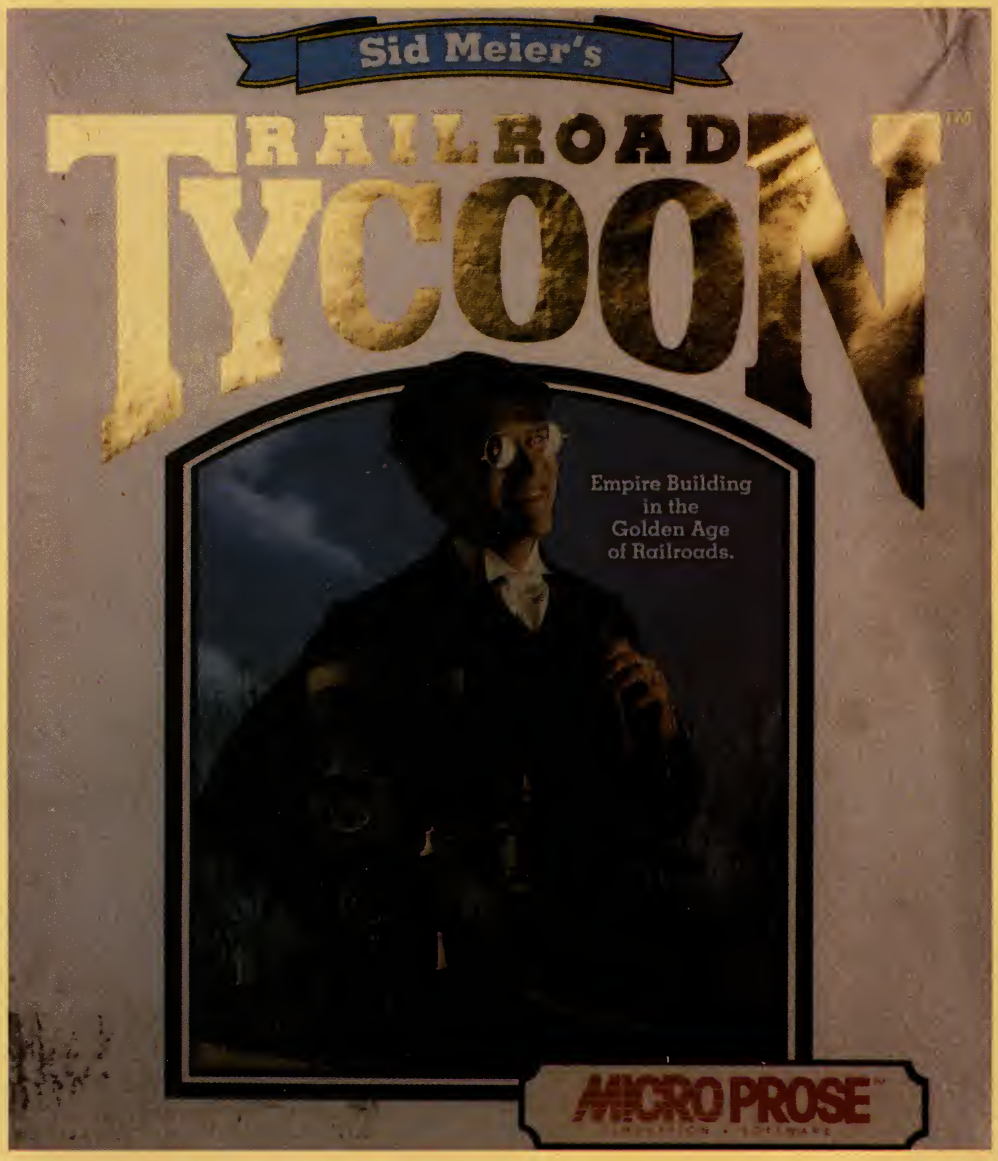
Graphical Supremacy



Second Front First

Magical Monkey Island

STRATEGY PLUS AWARDS 1990



★ GAME OF THE YEAR ★

Railroad Tycoon — **Microprose**

STRATEGY

ADVENTURE

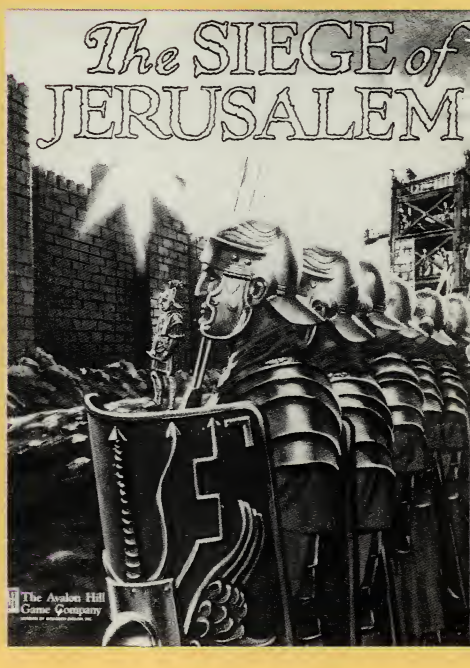
Wonderland

Virgin/Mas

BOARD WARGAME

Siege of Jerusalem

Avalon Hil



SIMULATION

Harpoon

360/Mirrorsoft

SPORTS

Indianapolis 500

Electronic Arts

WARGAME

Second Front

SSI/US Gold

ROLE-PLAYING

Ultima VI

Origin/Mindscape

BOARDGAME

Adel Verpflichtet

FX Schmid

1990

A WALKTHRU

BY BRIAN WALKER

Continued from page 29

of a shake up, this is surely it. Like wargames, role-playing games are suffering from too literal conversions of the pen and paper systems. But is this what role-players want? As long as they keep buying the games it's hard to argue against it. **Buck Rogers** got some pretty indifferent reviews, even in the comics, but the game sold like there was no tomorrow (eh, Buck?).

Elsewhere, it was the same old story: roll up a character, visit ye olde shop, and spend a few years traipsing around a dungeon trying to find out how to unlock a door. Dreary stuff, but it all seemed to sell. **Ultima VI** took role-playing as far it could go within these parameters, offering as it did, brilliant graphics and a consistent world.

Microprose claim to be working on a role-playing game that is 'different to anything that's ever been done before'. With respect to Sid Meier and his team, that's not too difficult. Role-playing is splendid concept that was borne out of fantasy and subsequently swamped by it. Why are there no games where you generate characters other than those that exist in lands peopled only by mutants and Martians? How about being able to role-play a banker, or a politician, or even an Editor (no cracks about mutants, please)? Aren't they valid fantasies too?

Buck Rogers – popular hero

Ultimately Ultima VI

PGA Tour Golf on course

WAR SIMULATIONS

If you've ever wanted to drive a tank, fly a plane, or pilot a sub, this was your year. Microprose and Lucasfilm battled it out with **F-19 Stealth Fighter** and **Their Finest Hour** respectively. Each were worthy of an award, as were **Silent Service II** and **M1 Tank Platoon**, also from Microprose. In between the big names comes the academic game of the year, **Action Stations** from Internecine – a sort of text adventure for wargamers.

The battle was won, though, by 360's **Harpoon** – a brilliant sim of modern naval warfare (which is now more of a fantasy, thankfully). More than any other game this year, this showed what can be done using the power and memory of the computer. Already the Amiga version is said to be the best selling game ever on that format in the US. More, please.

SPORTS SIMULATIONS

Golf was again the sport of the year if the number of sims on the subject were anything to go by. EA's **PGA Tour Golf** was the leader on the board by our reckoning, though the unwieldy (in name only) **Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf and Course Builder** from Accolade ran it pretty close. Another Accolade game proved to be one of our favourites: **Hardball 2**, a fine game whose sales were stymied by the relative unpopularity of the sport itself in the UK. Unfortunately, the sports that *are* popular in the UK spawned nothing but rubbish. Even Anco's **Kick Off**, which all the comics frothed about, looked to these eyes to be nothing more than **Pong** with 22 players.

One thing all the critics agreed upon though, was that for technical excellence **Indianapolis 500** was hard to beat. The best sound ever heard in a game, good graphics, and an amazingly accurate simulation of one of the world's great races, all crammed into files that required less than 350K of RAM to run. David Kaemmer and Richard Garcia: pop those champagne corks now, for producing some of the tightest coding ever seen this side of the Kremlin.

BOARDGAMES

Another appalling year in the UK – MB's **Space Crusade** apart. Most of the games were simply too awful to write about. The US offerings were better, though hardly earth shaking. Avalon Hill released two Derek Carver designs, **Showbiz** and **New World**, both of which are fine games, but several years old. This would have not mattered were it not for the dreary productions which made them appear even older.

The gloom was relieved only by Germany. And how! Games just seem to grow on trees there. Their 'Game of the Year' was **Adel Verpflichtet**, and what's good enough for them is good enough for us. This had everything most UK games lack: a class production, and an original design (albeit one based on bluff). And not a question in sight. Already sales are approaching the half million mark in Germany alone. Little wonder. It is not only everything that a *family* game should be, but one that holds equal appeal for the hobbyist.

BOARD WARGAMES

Another disaster area, so to speak. A year of dwindling releases and dwindling quality. Little wonder so many wargamers are making the trek over to silicon. GDW continued to bring out games. The rules followed a few months later. Nice to see **Blue Max** and **A House Divided** back on the shelves, though. TSR (bless 'em) kept the flag flying with the superb **Battle of Britain**, the revamped **World War II**, and the impressive **Europe Aflame**. Victory had a pretty mixed year with the excellent **3rd Fleet** and the disappointing **Shell Shock**.

Best of a mediocre bunch was **Siege of Jerusalem** from Avalon Hill. An excellent and innovative design from a period hitherto neglected. We shall not see its like again. SP

NEW SHOP ADDRESS !!

* ROLE PLAYING * WARGAMES *

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Harpoon Battle Set #2(North Atlantic Convoy)	(360)	**IBM**	£24.99
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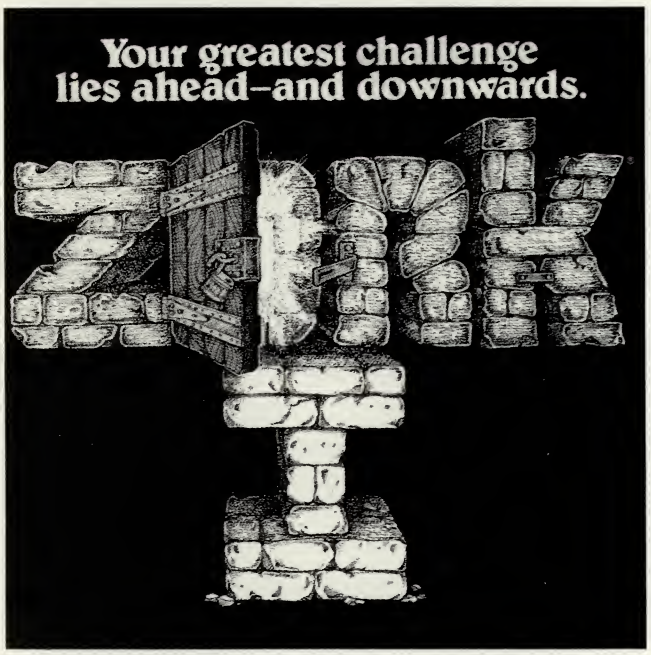
The Hitch-hiker's Guide to Infocom

John Scott thumbs a ride with some Virgins



HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
Designed by Steve Meretzky & Douglas Adams.

ZORK I
Designed by Mark Blank & Dave Lebling.

PLANETFALL
Designed by Steve Meretzky

THE PHONE rang. It was the Editor. 'Hi, John,' he said. 'I think I've got some stuff you'll like.' I wasn't so sure – his voice sounded edgy, uncertain.

'Yes?' I said, cautiously.

'Some Infocom adventures. Ah, they don't have any graphics... Um, no sound either, but I thought perhaps–'

So that was it! He was dubious about whether I would be interested in anything that made so little use of the power of the Amiga. He was probably utterly amazed to hear me yelling uncontrollably down the long distance line, 'YES. YES! I'll take any Infocom stuff you can send me.'

Sure enough, I was soon in possession of a neat little set of five text-only adventures, typing my responses word by word, and not a beep, sprite, or mouse in sight.

Perhaps it's just a sign of my own progressive decrepitude that I was soon wallowing in nostalgia as I explored, once again, the Great Underground Empire, tangled with the Leather Goddesses of Phobos, and sought to rescue a cat kidnapped by the Evil One. After all, compared to the all-singing all-dancing Epic Fantasy Stereophonic 3-D Arcade Adventure MegaHypes of today, these little games are very definitely antiques – no doubt about it.

On the other hand, let's remember that antiques can be precious and enjoyable to people who enjoy That Sort Of Thing, and if you're an adventure enthusiast who hasn't tried Infocom's brand of 'Interactive Fiction', then you're missing a treat.

Actually, 'Interactive Fiction' is a pretty good description of an Infocom game, as most of them have a fairly strong story line and far, far more textual output than other text adventures.

Interactive Fish

Take **Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy**, for example, the first of the current re-releases. Unlike most other games based on books and films, this was actually written by the book's author, Douglas Adams. If you've read the book, played the disc, listened to the radio series or rubbed yourself with the towel, you'll know the storyline pretty well, but the game has just enough variation to make it difficult. We all remember that Arthur Dent has to stick a fish in his ear (don't we?), but when you're faced with having to get the darned thing out of a dispensing machine, I guarantee that you'll be tearing your hair out – it's not that difficult – it's just takes longer than you would think.

Hitch-hiker is cleverly written, so that you get to play the part of not only the long suffering Arthur Dent, but also the egocentric Zaphod Beeblebrox, and other main characters from the novel.

One of the fun things about an Infocom game is the sheer amount of utterly useless information they contain. This is most obvious in **Hitch-hiker**, where examining an object may provide an answer to a problem, or may just provide a typically Douglas Adams type of description. Look at the bulldozer poised to demolish Arthur Dent's house, and you'll discover that it is the kind of bulldozer used to demolish other bulldozers, let alone little houses. Then when you get your hands on the actual Hitch-hikers Guide, you can use it to look up entries on loads of things.

Grue The Day

Number two on the re-release list is **Zork I**, the first episode of the famous Great Underground Empire trilogy. This is probably the most dated and my least favourite of these games. It seems to be based on the original mainframe Classic Adventure. You find a hole in the ground, go down, and find yourself discovering the ruins of a once great civilisation. Not as much action as **Hitch-hiker**, but lots of thought and deduction needed. Watch out for the twisty maze, and try not to get eaten by a Grue. What! You don't know what a Grue is? Just buy an Infocom game and type 'WHAT IS A GRUE'. Either that or just wander around in the dark...

Lost In Space

Number three is **Planetfall**. You've joined the Stellar Patrol and are assigned to cleaning duties. That's why when your ship explodes and you land on a strange new planet you are only armed with your trusty mop. I can't say too much about this one, since I've just started playing it and am a long way from the finish, but you'll soon pick up a desperately frustrating robot with a planet-sized

intellect and all the maturity of an 8 year old. I'm beginning to suspect that the place is deserted because of a nasty old plague, and I think that I may have picked it up. Oh dear... So far, as I explore the huge complex it feels a bit similar to **Zork**.

Wish Mail And I

Next on the list comes **Wishbringer**. This, like so many of these adventures, begins with the player character in a very normal, humdrum everyday situation: a junior employee of a Post Office in a nowhere little seaside town. Your boss wants you to deliver a letter to the funny little old lady who lives in the house up on the hill. Off you go, once you get past the vicious poodle, past the library, the church, the police station. All quite normal.

Up the hill, deliver the letter. Gosh, she looks quite upset, what does the letter say? 'Deliver the magic stone to me before the moon sets or you will never see your cat again! Signed, The Evil One.' Then the old lady pats you on the head, you feel rather dizzy, and you leave the shop. Except... Except... Surely things have changed somehow. That vulture wasn't there before! And that can't really be a troll guarding the old toll bridge? Why is there a Boot Squad Station where the Police Station used to be? Infocom bill this as the ideal starting point for first time interactive fiction players. Possession of the Wishstone (once you find it) grants you seven magic wishes. If your wits can't solve a problem, you can always use a wish. **Wishbringer** reads very well indeed.

Sticky Moments

Last but not least comes another personal favourite, the **Leather Goddesses of Phobos**. This is a send up of the old 1930s pulp adventures. You are kidnapped by the Goddesses and taken away to suffer a fate worse than death. Having escaped with your fellow prisoner, you begin a 'naughty, bawdy, and very, very amusing romp across the solar system.' It's possible to play the game in one of three modes – tame, suggestive, and lewd. The explicitness of each successive sexual misadventure depends on the mode chosen. It's all good clean(ish) slightly smutty fun, a sort of 'Confessions of a Space Jock'. It's also possible to play the game as a female character; does that mean it's not really sexist? Thought not... This has got to be one of the funniest Infocoms of the lot. Some of the solutions are pretty off-beat too. Listen to this – at one point in the game you need to 'remove' an angle of 82 degrees (never mind why!). Among the long list of stuff you'll gather up are a jar of untangling cream, and a machine which turns out to be a 'T Remover'. All you have to do is use the T Remover on the cream, so you now have a jar of un-angling cream. Ged-dit?

The story line shoots along at a cracking pace as you sail the canals of Mars, avoid Venus Fly Traps, escape the perverted clutches of a mad scientist, sword fight a space pirate, rescue a damsel in distress from a *very* Naughty monster, and gather up the collection of strange items necessary to bring the Goddesses to their knees (oo-er!). And you are sure to get at least one big surprise from your companion in arms. Cracking stuff!

Missing Extras

My first taste of the Infocom experience was back in my C64 days. I paid about 15 quid for **Zork I** – the most I'd ever paid for a program. I think that **Hitch-hiker** and **Leather Goddesses** cost a bit more, but really, at £9.99 you positively, honestly and truly can't go wrong with any of these games. I've only one minor gripe: one of the attractions of the old time Infocoms was the fistful of goodies included in the package. For example, **Hitch-hiker** came with a large 'Don't Panic!' button (which I still have), an apparently empty bag which actually contained a microscopic space fleet, a piece of fluff (fluff plays an important part in the game) and a pair of 'peril sensitive' sunglasses which turned opaque at the first sign of danger. **Wishbringer** included the actual envelope which you had to deliver. **Leather Goddesses** had a pair of red/green 3-D specs, a 3-D 1930 style sci-fi comic/graphic novel containing clues necessary to complete the game, and (believe it or not) a 'scratch and sniff' pad!

Sadly, you'll look in vain for these extras in the budget rerelease. The comic is still there in a smaller monochrome form, so you don't miss out on vital clues. Fair enough, I suppose, at the low price, but when the program tells you to open an envelope you didn't get, or to sniff a smell you can't scratch, well, you can't help but feel cheated somehow, even if the packaging manages to provide all the necessary clues in some other form.

Nor is the Infocom parser perfect – but it's still a *lot* better than some games being produced at present. Those awfully clever Infocom people seem to have programmed responses to even the most unlikely player inputs.

Someone once said that they preferred radio to television 'because the pictures were so much better'. These games show that well written prose can be more evocative, more exciting, than even the flashiest graphics and ear-tickling sounds. It makes me wonder what would be in store if some enterprising chap set out to launch a renaissance of the text adventure by writing a super-dooper parser that used the massive memory of the modern machines. I suppose no games company would want to know. *(Oh no? Check out Virgin Mastertronic's* ***Wonderland*** *– Ed)* SP

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS
Designed by Steve Meretzky

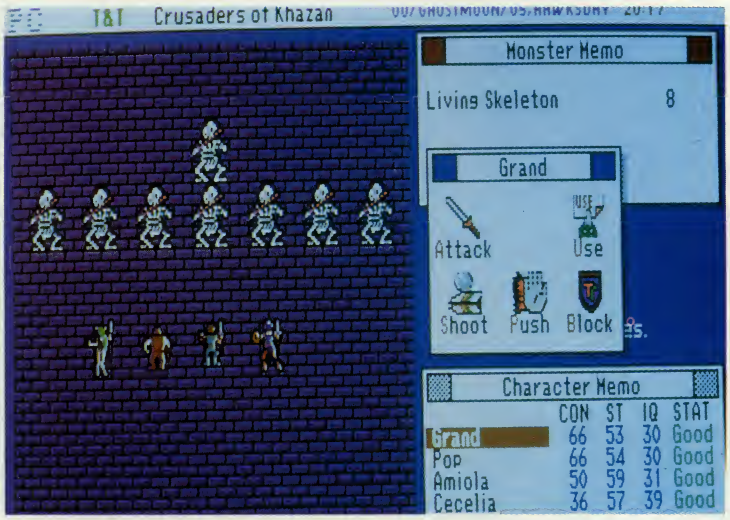
WISHBRINGER
Designed by Brian Moriarty

These games have been re-released by Virgin Mastertronic on all formats at £9.99 each.

TUNNELS & TROLLS

Crusaders Of Khazan

by John Harrington



ALL FANTASY role-playing games seem to start with some pseudo historical mumbo jumbo. This review starts with some genuine history. Long, long ago, a game called **Dungeons & Dragons** was invented. It was the world's first commercially produced fantasy role-playing game (FRPG). Shortly after its release came **Tunnels & Trolls** (**T&T**), the world's second commercially produced FRPG.

T&T was a cheaper, simpler and more jocular alternative to **D&D**. Its other main selling point was its suitability for solitaire play: years before those *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks swept through the school playgrounds of Britain, the publishers of **T&T** were pumping out solitaire adventures for lonely FRP fans in Alaska and Milton Keynes.

Crusaders of Khazan is a faithful computer adaptation of the **T&T** system, which means this is a very old fashioned game in FRP terms. Monsters turn up in the high street for no apparent reason, spells can be blasted off in public places without anyone batting an eyelid, and characters can carry the entire mineral wealth of South Africa in their backpacks without suffering a hernia. The quest is simply a conversion of several previously published **T&T** solo adventures, held together by a single theme. So, in effect, what you have is a computerised *Fighting Fantasy* book where you do not have to bother with the record keeping, but neither do you roll your own dice.

You start the game with four characters, whose abilities are determined by dice rolls for attributes such as Strength, IQ and Luck. These four characters are plonked down in the city of Gull on the isle of Phoron and told, as is usually the case in these escapades, that the future of the world depends on them. All they have to do is find the whereabouts of a great wizard who is slumbering somewhere on the vast mainland (a nifty map is included with the game to help you navigate), wake him up and he will single handedly defeat the forces of evil. The characters then kit themselves out and strike out into the wild blue yonder seeking adventure and clues to the whereabouts of the great wizard Khazan.

Take That You Fiend

As opposed to traditional adventure games, the emphasis is on decision making rather than problem solving. A typical situation might find you stumbling across a ritual sacrifice in the middle of a wood: do you try and rescue the victim, stand and watch or slink away? A true role-player would make the decisions on the basis of what he or she thought the characters would do; however, the game system gives no reward for role-playing, only for beating the living daylights out of the bad guys. With the emphasis on recklessness it is inevitable that some or maybe all of your original characters will die. Provided at least one of your party escapes, however, there is always an opportunity to recruit new members in the next town. This easy come, easy go approach somewhat lessens the sense of character development which is usually the main appeal of fantasy role-playing.

Myriad Encounters

One cannot complain at the number of possible encounters in the game. Even in deserted wastelands the characters are often assailed by homicidal monsters or befriended by eccentric hermits, so there is plenty of replay value. Nor can one complain about the user interface, which is optionally mouse or menu driven.

The graphics are less than mind blasting, consisting mainly of overhead views of map terrain or of tactical displays during combat sequences. Fans of **Dungeon Master** will find the visuals absurdly crude, with no first person perspective and no animation. It would appear that most of the effort has been put into the gameplay, with the result that the game proceeds at a rapid pace – a bit too rapid at times when played from the hard disk on a PS/2, despite the option of slowing down the message speed.

Adventure fans will find this game a bit too mindless, action fans a bit too wordy and FRP fans may find it a bit quaint. For nostalgic **Tunnels & Trolls** fans this game will be like rediscovering a favourite pool cue you thought you lost long ago, while for people who like the idea of adventures but who lack the patience to go through all that problem solving and synonym juggling, this may well prove ideal. Fantasy role-playing adventures are often likened to books, in which case **Crusaders of Khazan** would be filed alongside the tales of Conan the Barbarian or Fafhrd & the Gray Mouser, rather than the weightier tomes of JRR Tolkien. SP

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Elizabeth Danforth

Published by
New World Computing

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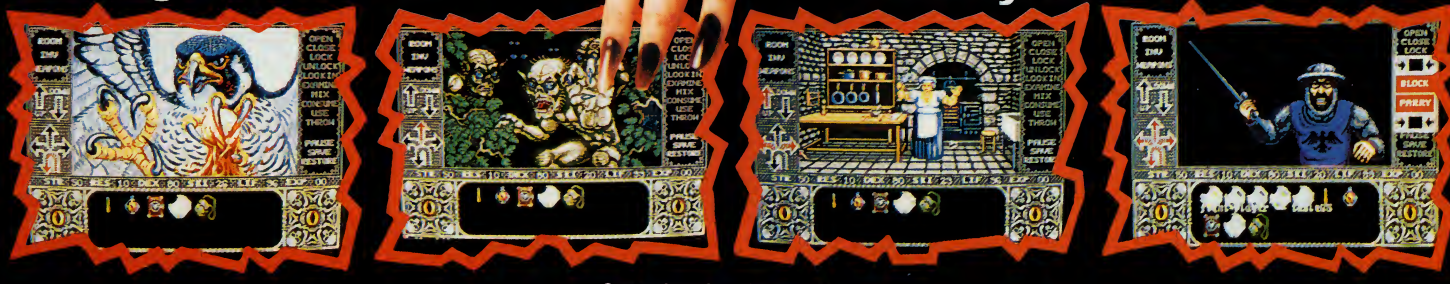

Screenshots from IBM PC version.

Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications.

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ALTERED DESTINY

TV Sucks

by Theo Clarke

PJ BARRETT III was going to spend the evening watching an all-night movie show on TV with his girlfriend. But the TV repair shop had muddled his TV with that of a swaggering, sword-wielding barbarian hero, so PJ was sucked through the screen into a bizarre, parallel universe. Floating in space, clutching his bowl of popcorn, PJ is addressed by a disappointed disembodied head which charges him with saving the universe by recovering the Jewel of Light *(Are you quite sure about all this? – Ed).*

Humble Origins

The stranger in a strange land, trapped in a world he never made, is a common motif in science fiction. This dressing up of the old story of the common man as questing hero is given an added zest by the knowing humour of its presentation. Had Berlyn chosen simply to start the story in the fantasy world this would have been a very hard, entertaining adventure for fantasy enthusiasts. As it is **Altered Destiny** will appeal to a broader audience.

This is the second adventure game from Accolade and it uses the same game engine as **Search for the King** (reviewed in *SP* #1). Michael Berlyn was responsible for the parser in the Accolade Adventure Programming Engine and is known as the man who wrote **Cyborg** for Infocom as well as being an established science fiction author. **Altered Destiny** is the imaginative creation that one would expect from such a designer. It is clear that most of the shortcomings of **Search for the King** have now been overcome.

The graphics are even more sophisticated than those in **Search...** The animated opening sequence is masterly, but the process is still too slow. The animation was unbearably sluggish at 8 MHz and barely acceptable on a 33 MHz machine that must be far removed from most games machines.

One For The Vine

Search for the King experimented with a few different points of view but **Altered Destiny** takes this to the logical conclusion – leave the crossroads, where the screen views a scene some twenty metres wide, and the point of view changes to a panorama spanning at least a kilometre.

All of the scenes are animated. When PJ first arrives in the world of Daltere he lands on an island floating in midair, apparently tethered by giant vines. Airborne seed pods float across the scene. Nearby a thin creature creates solid fragments of information from the pigments that continually fall from the sky. His manufacturing process is a simple but effective animated sequence. Every landscape is populated with active wildlife.

The musical accompaniment is simple, but it lacks that irritating sense of crass repetition that characterises most game tunes. There are at least two dozen different songs which ensure a variety of sounds. More importantly, the melodies at each location cycle smoothly and effectively. Little use has been made of the facilities provided by the supported sound cards, but even the integral PC speaker produces a bearable sound track.

Plot Twists

The use of the mechanics of the engine is good enough to present the game without being so clever as to intrude. Attention is firmly focused on the story and the puzzles prepared by the designer. The plot may not be original but the characters are varied and the tale is amusing. Behind this slight facade lies a ferociously challenging puzzle.

It is difficult to compare the complexity of adventure games retrospectively, but **Altered Destiny** feels like the hardest puzzle to appear in this genre for a very long time. Part of the difficulty arises from the unusual manner in which clues are presented. Much of the necessary information is gained by asking characters about the subjects rather than from simple 'look at' commands. The 'look at' command remains sufficiently important to be abbreviated but the use of 'ab' as a synonym for 'ask about' shows the significance of enquiry.

Some essential clues are purely visual: a metal plate in the floor has geometrical indentations in it; recognising the association between those shapes and some items seen early in the game requires sophisticated analysis.

Altered Destiny is not for newcomers to adventure gaming. The level of difficulty is way beyond the likely ability of anyone who is unfamiliar with the language of adventures. Experienced adventurers with a penchant for tough puzzles, however, will find the game both charismatic and highly rewarding. SP

Designed by
Michael Berlyn

Published by
Accolade

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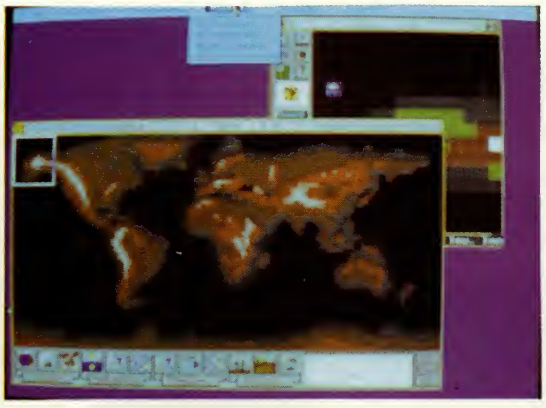

The stage is set for Billy the Kid (far left). One day all this will be yours : Sim Earth (left).

THE KID GOES WEST

Billy the Kid is a classic revenge western that combines deduction and adventure with arcade action. Programmed by erstwhile text adventure company Level 9, **Billy** offers the player two different roles: Billy himself or Pat Garrett, who in real life caused him to start knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door.

The catalyst for revenge, however, is the murder of Billy's close friends in the Lincoln County War. The form this revenge takes involves bank robbery, cattle rustling, and eventually running the murderers out of town.

Pat Garrett's job while all this goes on is to keep tabs on Billy and arrest him where possible.

Arcade sequences are normally the bane of adventurers, but in this context they seem entirely appropriate. Twenty animated screens help move the tale right along. Published by Ocean Software, **Billy the Kid** will be available on all formats in January.

Sim Earth

Despite being 'reviewed' in the comics, Maxis's **Sim Earth** was still undergoing extensive debugging in early December. It's easy to say that this is the follow-up to the wonderful **Sim City**, but in truth it's considerably more than that. The game even has philosophical pretensions because it incorporates the Gaia hypothesis of scientist James Lovelock. Lovelock contended that Earth is a single organism with a life and will of its own.

Like **Sim City**, the object is not so much to win as to create – which in this case means a living, breathing planet.

In addition to the main game, seven preset scenarios are provided, each of which presents a strategic challenge. One such challenge involves putting life into the dead planets of Mars and Venus.

As much an educational experience as a game, **Sim Earth** looks destined to be one of the year's biggies in every sense. It's due for release by Ocean Software on the PC towards the end of January.

Spirit of Excalibur

Spirit of Excalibur is a blend of fantasy role-playing, adventure and combat simulation set in Arthurian Britain. The player takes the role of Arthur's successor Lord Constantine, who must make his way to Camelot to take up the reins of power. As you might expect, the Saxon hordes start ranting, raving and demanding pints of lager.

Using the icon-based interface the player can check character status, zoom up and down the map and give directional commands to parties or forces.

Spirit of Excalibur is programmed by Synergistic Software, the firm that brought you **War in Middle Earth**, and will be released in February, by Virgin Mastertronic, on all formats.

Spot

Spot, an animated multi-player abstract game from Virgin Mastertronic, appears to be a cross between Reversi and Go. Whatever it is, there's no denying that it is quite a challenge and a lot of fun. The board can change shape, 'secret' squares pop up offering bonuses to the discoverer and the animated figures run around the screen making rude gestures to crushed opponents.

The computer can play on nine different levels, or it is possible to play with three fellow humans. **Spot** is due to be released by Virgin Mastertronic in January. SP

Heir rising adventure: Spirit of Excalibur (below). Making a gesture: Spot (bottom).

LINKS

The Challenge of Golf

by Brian Walker

Designed by Vance Cook, Kevin Homer and Roger Carver

Published by Access/US Gold

Price to be announced

Available for the PC only (all formats in February)

VGA (256 colour), MCGA

RealSound, AdLib, Speech Adaptor, Msound boards supported

Requires 640k of RAM
Hard disk and mouse strongly recommended

Course disks to follow: Bountiful, Utah (out now in the US), Firestone Feb 1 (US release date)

LEADERBOARD from Access was, until the release of **PGA Tour Golf**, the standard bearer in the popular field of computer golf. But Access are not taking this lying down. Back they storm down the fairway with **Links** (thanks for not calling it 'Leaderboard II, guys) – a dazzling rendition of a sport that is often used as an excuse to wear some of the worst clothes in the world.

The immaculate front end, with its cinema style introduction, provides an appropriate lead-in to some of the treasures in store. By the time you've had a few 'G&Ts', and listened to the birdies go cheep, cheep, cheep, you just can't wait to get those clubs-a-swingin'. Unfortunately, however, there is another player on the course. A player that will slow you down no end. His name is Memory and he eats RAM for lunch. Whether you are prepared to put up with his delaying tactics is a question only you, the reader, can answer, though guidance is at hand.

Swing Time

Arriving on five nicely monogrammed disks, **Links** offers a facility for up to eight human players. Only one course is provided with the game. The fact that this is the beautiful Torrey Pines course in California compensates somewhat for this stinginess. Future course disks will be made available, but the quoted US price of $25 per disk might be considered prohibitively expensive.

The first facility to negotiate is the impressive 'swing set-up panel'. This enables customisation of swing types for each club – in all 120 different positions. A default mode is provided for beginners. A 'stance' option is also provided to enable the player to simulate their real stance.

Moving along to the tee now, the first thing that distinguishes **Links** from the pack is the unusual power bar, and the vast number of 'buttons' offering an array of options. The power bar is almost horseshoe shaped and is as every bit as difficult to use as that implies. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that it is not scaled, and also by the striking method – you click, *hold down*, and release to determine distance. You must then snap back for accuracy. This is the reverse of the way most such gauges work. It takes some getting used to, but it's possible.

I was more disappointed to see that no stats facility is offered. One of the joys of this type of game is being able to improve on past performances. A 'print scorecard' facility is provided, but this is scant compensation for a good database.

One of the most useful options on show is the 'address' facility. This enables you to practice your swing before each shot. There is also the possibility to deliberately draw or fade your shot, though the manual wisely recommends getting used to the game before you try this Fancy Dan stuff.

To aim your shot, a red and white pole pops up which you must then point in the appropriate direction. This can also be used to judge distance.

Putting is one of the most important parts of golf yet the manual gives it short shrift – the power bar changes when you hit the green, though you are not told what effect this has. This is extremely unrealistic as any golfer worth his St Michael V-Neck would be able to assess the power required for such a shot. As it is you are left in the not unfamiliar 'suck it and see' position. The overhead view of the course is excellent, and offers the vital, but frequently overlooked 'ball distance to cursor' facility, enabling you to ascertain *all* distances on the hole and not just the one to the pin.

Overall it's hard to describe the mechanics as user friendly, but conversely **Links** manages to convey many of the difficulties you would encounter during a round.

Thanks For The Memory

The real *tour de force* of **Links** however, is the quality of the graphics. These are not just the best I've seen in a golf game, but in *any* game. In maximum detail mode they are truly a sight to behold and are certainly worth the wait. Which brings us back to our old friend, Mr Memory. You'll need at least 570K of *free* RAM for a full 256 colour display and sound. And that's not all. Screen updates take almost two minutes! Same goes for any action replays.

A par 4 hole takes close on 15 minutes to complete (just like the real thing), assuming you finish on even par. These times are based on a fastish 286 machine with a clock speed of 16MHz. The program not only acknowledges the problem but brazenly, though at the same time thoughtfully, includes a memory manager ('Hydem') for those lucky enough to have extended or expanded RAM. The manual suggests that with '2 or 3 meg of RAM' running on a

Continued on page 45

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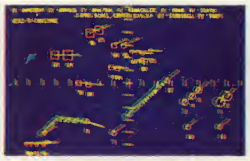
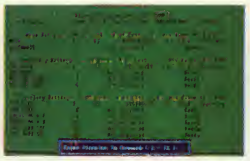
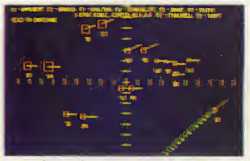


Battlelines engaging, while destroyers lay smoke.



Control guns in automatic or manual modes.



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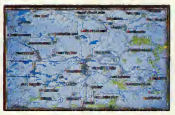

WHITE DEATH: *Detailed map showing battle sector around Velikiye Luki.*

HISTORICAL SIMULATION *A well designed historical simulation is always very satisfying conceptually but all too often extremely tedious in the execution. Storm Computers Ltd, in conjunction with U.S. programmers, have employed advanced personal computer technology to do for wargaming what the computerized spreadsheet did for accounting - most of the work and all of the calculations.*

WHITE DEATH

Battle for Velikiye Luki, November 1942

FEATURES:
Detailed full colour graphics
Realistic sound effects
One or two players
German saboteurs
Siegfried Line
Artillery supply
Terrain effects
Paratroopers
V-2 Rocket attacks
Play customization
Save Game function
Handicapping system for play balance
Weather Fuel Dumps
Aerial bombardment

HISTORY:
Early in December 1944 America and Britain were awaiting the return of its victorious armies in Europe. But on the other side of the Siegfried Line, Hitler had other plans, launching his last major surprise attack of the war - operation "Wacht am Rhein".

The plan was to quickly strike weakened Allied lines in Belgium and Luxembourg and to break through and move quickly to the Meuse to capture Liege and finally Antwerp. The capture of Antwerp was thought to be essential to postpone the invasion of Germany, giving the Fuhrer a chance to honour his promises of secret weapons which would win the war.

FEATURES:
VERY sophisticated computer opponent
Six scenarios
Digitized sound effects (AMIGA)
Supply
Weather effects
Bunkers/Tank fright
Morale/Commandos
Rail movement/Rockets
Artillery spotting/Barrage
Headquarters/Garrisons
Unit Identification Support
Play by telephone

HISTORY:
The Russian Front, winter 1942. As the German Sixth Army slowly starves in the devastated city of Stalingrad, the Soviets have launched a second onslaught against the Wehrmacht.
In a communique which Moscow radio broadcast last night the Russians announced their objective: Encircle and destroy the German garrison entrenched at the vital rail junction of Velikiye Luki.

Lieutenant General Perkayev's Third Shock Army, reinforced with three separate corps have been assigned the mission.

It is understood that two under-strength but heavily fortified German divisions plus a number of rear area security and support troops defend the sector. All roads in this near-trackless wilderness run through Velikiye Luki. The stage is set for a bitterly fought battle on the cold snowy wastes of the Eastern Front.

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A RIDGE TOO FAR

Strategy in Microprose's M1 Tank Platoon

Dave Palmer goes over the top

M1 Tank Platoon designed by Arnold Hendrick and Scott Spanburg

Published by Microprose

Price £29.99 (ST & Amiga), £34.99 (PC)

Available on all formats

PC version is in CGA, EGA, VGA

UPON starting any engagement, the most obvious thing to do is to try to move your forces to the best positions available on the map. If there is a large hill that the Pact forces are going to have to pass by, this is an ideal position for you to adopt the 'hull down' manoeuvre. This is achieved by the following steps:

i) Position your forces halfway up a hill, facing the enemy.

ii) Now take control of the first tank.

iii) Go to the gunner's position – you should only be able to see the crest of the hill.

iv) Give an Advance order (either fast or slow, depending on how far from the brow of the hill you are).

v) When the terrain on the other side of the hill becomes visible from the gunner's position, order the vehicle to halt.

vi) Switch to the driver's position and make sure that the driver cannot see over the top of the hill – if he can, give a backup order and then halt the tank when only the crest of the hill is visible to the driver. Switch back to the gunner position to ensure he can still see over the hill.

vii) Repeat these steps for the rest of your tanks.

The advantage of this position is that only the turret of your tank is visible to the advancing enemy, while his forces are in full view. This makes your forces much harder to hit, while his are sitting ducks.

Seconds Out

Another good tactic to use when facing advancing Pact forces is to put your secondary units to good use. Again, deploy your platoon of M1s using the 'hull down' manoeuvre. Next, find another hill (or hills) which the enemy will have to pass by. Move your secondary forces behind this hill, out of view of the advancing enemy.

When the Pact forces are in range of your M1 platoon, give the order to fire at will. Wait until the Russians are concentrating on your main firepower, then bring your secondary forces around the hill to attack the Pact forces from the rear. If you have any other support such as mortar, gunship, and so on, then order these to attack before you bring your secondary forces into view. This manoeuvre will result in the enemy being caught in one massive cross fire. Only the Guard (Elite) forces will stand any chance against this onslaught.

Any battle with the Guard forces will result in casualties. When facing the cream of the Russian forces, there is one main point to remember – your M1 tanks are the only forces you can't afford to lose. To this end, any other secondary forces are expendable provided they are not sacrificed needlessly.

In The Smoke

Before even considering taking on the Guard forces, you should engage in many battles with lesser forces, to enable you to build up each crewman's rating and battle experience. If you have to stop the Guards from advancing, then use as much firepower as possible as early as you can. If you have any support via the HQ Radio Net, then use everything you have on the first line of the advancing enemy.

You will find that the first Soviet forces are usually the best equipped and best trained, so try to take out as many of these as possible before they get in range of your main platoon. When they are within range of your M1s, use your mortars to deploy smoke rounds between you and the enemy. At this point, your main force should already be under fire at will orders, so until the smoke disperses, you will have the advantage. If there are still considerable pact forces left after the smoke has dispersed then don't stand still.

Keep your forces moving as much as possible if they are out in the open. If they are in a defensive position (such as hull down) then watch the battle from the main map. When a lot of Soviet shells start finding their targets, then again move your forces. Even the most defensive position will not offer much protection to your platoon

once the top Soviet forces have found their range.

Until you get used to out-thinking the best Pact forces, it is a good idea to keep one of your support units near your base. This will ensure that any stragglers which manage to break through your lines will be catered for. These back-up units should have a clear field of fire, so position them on a nearby hill if possible. Also, at the beginning of the game give them fire at will orders – you may not have the time to do it later on, in the thick of the battle.

General Tips

Use the practice ranges until you are proficient at operating the tank from each crewman's position.

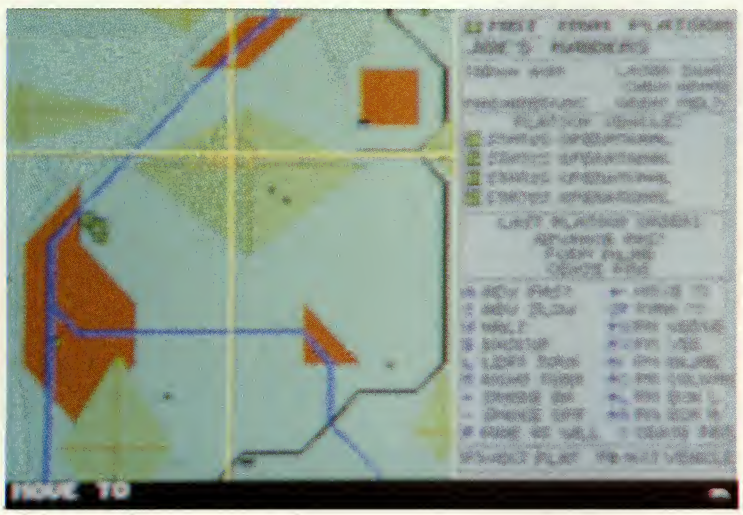
If you think of a new tactic to try, then again practise it first. If you want to try it on the battlefield first, then use a different platoon rather than your own personal crew.

Don't waste ammo. If some of your targets are jeeps or other 'harmless' vehicles, then take out the main force first and mop up the soft targets with your heavy machine gun. This is especially important on higher skill levels when you will find your ammo being depleted rapidly on higher skill levels. Check each tank's ammo levels regularly – if a tank runs out of ammo, then withdraw it from the battlefield immediately.

If your forces come under fire from enemy mortars, then you only have to move them from the spot where the mortars are falling. Moving about two inches away on the main map will usually suffice.

Should a tank lose a track and become immobilised, then you have two options: you can either allow the tank to be destroyed, in which case you will be given another crew at the end of your current scenario, or you can immediately concentrate all of your available firepower on any enemy units which are capable of destroying it. The option to choose depends on the circumstances. Remember, it takes time for your attack aircraft to reach the scene of a battle. Don't wait until the enemy is on top of your position before calling these units into play. Lastly, always try to have the advantage.

When deploying secondary forces, remember they don't have the firepower of your M1s. Try to position them where they will be firing at the least armoured part of the Soviet tanks, especially the rear. SP



Links, continued from page 42

386, screen updates should take '10 seconds'.

All of this is tacit confirmation of what we already know, namely that conventional 16 bit graphics have come to the end of the road. Unless, that is, we are expected to buy mainframes to run the games.

The software technology has sped ahead of the hardware required to run it. The games are only going to get bigger so the logical upgrade must be CD ROM. Sure enough the guys at Access are lining a version up on that very format. In addition they promise female golfers (shock!), a caddy to abuse, a tournament option, and a modem version.

But back to the present: **Links** is still an astonishing piece of software despite its flaws. **PGA Tour Golf** is faster and thus stronger on playability, but the graphics and fine detail of **Links** puts it in another dimension. If you can stand the *longeurs* while the screen redraws then it is certainly a recommended buy. And if the proposed expansion disks pan out, the chips served down at the clubhouse could be of the silicon, rather than the potato variety. SP

WE LIKE...

Flight Simulator 4 (PC)

Silent Service II (PC)

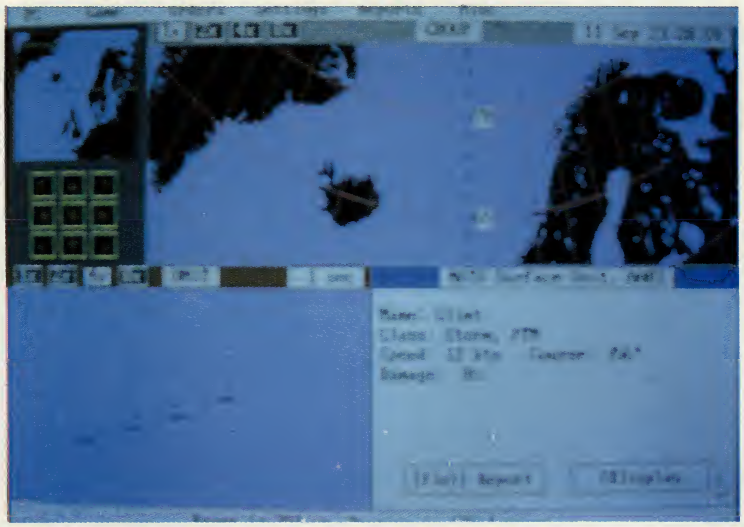
Flight of the Intruder (All)

F-19 Stealth Fighter (All)

Harpoon PC, Amiga)

THE BIG PICTURE

Strategy in Three-sixty's Harpoon, by Frank Dunn



SCOUTING or finding the enemy before they find you is the essence of modern naval operations.

One play through of the first Greenland Iceland UK BattleSet scenario reinforces the lesson which is amplified through all the **Harpoon** BattleSets. It doesn't matter how good or long ranged your assets (ships, submarines or aircraft) are if they do not have a known target to attack. So the first step is to determine where the threats are likely to come from, which groups you need to protect, and what you have available to detect possible attacks. Always read the scenario orders for clues as to what the enemy will gain a victory for, as this helps to sort out your defensive and offensive priorities.

Air Today

Much of the game turns around the correct handling of your aircraft. They offer speed and repeatability of tasks unlike ships and submarines, which are slow and have a limited capacity as regards missiles. Bases (Airfields and Ports) are simply fixed targets that are either near the enemy and thus vulnerable, or not that near and less prone to attack. The same goes for aircraft carriers, with the major exception that they are mobile and are often close to ships that you wish to protect, or targets that you want to attack with the aircraft they have on board. The scenario victory conditions impose a grand strategic framework within which you have to work. So having a rough list of threats and targets spend some time in the group map checking out the group courses and formations that the game starts with.

Use the Alt f2 key to toggle the unit or group call signs when you are not sure of IDs on either map (see also the manual supplement p57), Alt f1 is the same as Ctl Q, in other words Quit, while Alt f3 grants immediate nuclear release! It's also worthwhile early on, as you step through the formations, to alter the sector sizes to ones you'll want to use throughout the scenario.

Monster Mash

As NATO, the greatest threat to you are is provided by the land based Badger and Backfire bombers that carry the Kingfish missile, which has a 250 mile range. A quick check in the formation editor shows that the maximum range a patrol can go out to is 255 miles; obviously not a great deal of use if you are relying on early warning patrol planes such as the E-3 AWACS or Hawkeye to detect incoming raids. So once the early warning patrol is set in the formation editor, and the plane is airborne, use the split group option to get it on the group map then plot a course for it. The likely axis threat will be at high altitude with all its sensors on. Once it's far enough out – out 600 miles plus for the E-3 – then order it to loiter. Any incoming raid should then be detected early enough to make sure that your fighter patrols can intercept the bogies before they launch the dreaded Kingfish. If that fails and the raid launches missiles then the next best option is to get all your aircraft off the base or carrier and set up any remaining fighters as far out as possible in line with the incoming missiles. They will attempt to shoot down any missiles that come within their kill range, but make sure that their sensors are on and that they are along the same bearing as the missiles. You cannot designate missiles as targets in most cases, although it's not unknown for the program to offer a Nimrod anti-submarine plane the chance to intercept one!

One variant on this method is when a submarine fires a long range anti-submarine weapon and you have fighters close at hand; try to get the fighters in line with the weapon while it's still airborne. With luck they will attempt to engage it with missiles. It is not unknown for the Soviets to try this attack repeatedly against a NATO submarine, so keep the fighters in between the two submarine groups.

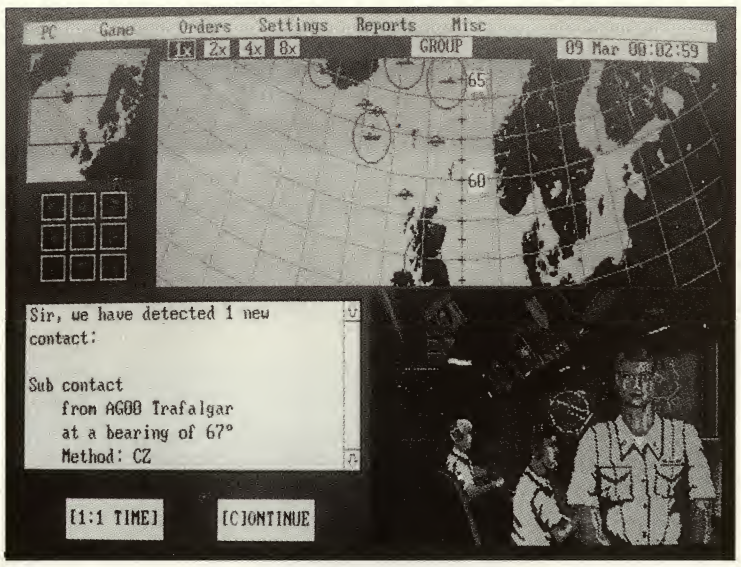
Dumb Waiter

As an opponent, the computer is a fairly dumb beast that goes after easy targets but shies away when it realises (detects) that it's up against more than it bargained for. Another characteristic is that it is not sensible in its targeting when using irreplaceable ship launched missiles. Take advantage of this after all the initial threats have been disposed of and you are on the offensive. Now is the

Harpoon was designed by Larry Bond and is published by Three-sixty/ Mirrorsoft, price £39.99

It is available for the PC only

time to change the loadout of your dual purpose fighters like the Hornet – you did put most of them to air to air at the start didn't you? – to standoff or anti-radar. When you have the big strike ready make sure that an early warning aircraft has radar coverage of the target to keep track of any defending fighters. Launch the strike in at least two groups, the first being the attackers with the longest range weapons available and anti-radar weapons as well plus any electronic warfare aircraft, the second being fighters which will screen the main strike group.



Dodgems Of The Sky

Make sure that the fighter group is 50 miles or so in front to allow for time in case of any stiff opposition before you play dodgems with the target's surface to air missiles. Note that if the target hasn't been kept track of then the range of its defensive missiles will not be displayed, so you will quickly lose planes that have strayed into range to unseen fire.

In fighter vs fighter combat the principles are simple: get as high as possible and fire first. The Tornado F3 excels in this respect as at high altitudes little can touch it, while it can engage at 27 miles.

A neat variation on what one player has called sandbagging is to put one group up high with its radar on and then stack large groups at low level with their radars off. The computer goes for the detected group at high and fails to spot the low groups until it's too late. To wear down the defensive power of the target fly into its range and as soon as you see a missile launch do an 180 degree turn and hit the afterburners. Repeat this several times and they will run out of missiles making it an easy kill for the main strike now in its final run in.

On The Surface

In the surface based scenarios the same principles apply. Use land based aircraft to cover possible submarine threats close to shore and ship based helicopters to screen the task force(s). Don't forget that the game doesn't keep track of logistics, so be quite free with the ferrying of planes from a base that the action has moved away from to one that's nearer. They will always have a complete range of weapons available to them at any base. Likewise you can always forward base carrier based planes as well.

As helicopters do not have the range of planes, make sure some are kept on 'ready to launch' in pairs at newly detected submarines. Use longer ranged ones such as the Sea Hawk, Lynx or Sea King singly as search platforms on the group map. Always offset them from the launching group before they turn their radar on at medium altitude or else you might give away your position. Lacking planes, the missile dodgem trick isn't available as helicopters are too slow and short ranged to contemplate using.

There is a great temptation to launch longer range weapons such as Tomahawk at newly detected surface groups. In general it's not worth the loss of the strike power as often they will be bearing only solutions (an elongated diamond marks their probable location) or area solution (a fat diamond) leaving the Tomahawks open to early detection and destruction when they turn their guidance radars on.

If you have submarines nearby then vector them onto the enemy to act as tattletales. But beware that large Soviet groups often have an escorting submarine close by. Close to the enemy until within range of the majority of your anti-ship missiles such as Harpoon and Tomahawk. Before that, however, enter the formation editor to optimise the disposition of your good anti-air ships like the Ticunderoga, Leahy and Belknap classes. Put them in sectors up the threat axis outside of the main body so they can engage as many of the inevitable incoming missiles as early as possible, though you will still lose ships as some missiles leak through the layered defences.

Don't counterfire until the major enemy units have been identified by your submarine(s) or helicopters. Target the opposing anti-air ships such as the Kirov and Slavas to lessen the price of entry for your later strikes against the other major units. But take note that in the North Atlantic Convoys (16 scenarios) BattleSet, the Kalinin and Baku appear with enhanced systems compared to the earlier Kirov and Kiev classes. If helicopters in the forward screen of the formation suddenly start disappearing the obvious cause will be that they are now within enemy anti-air range, pull them back or land them before you launch Harpoons. Time any submarine attacks to coincide with your surface strikes: this stretches the target group's defences over two boundaries thus making it react to two different but deadly threats.

Reality Checks

Because it's an excellent simulation, almost all the tactics that are practised for real usually work in the game. Moreover it's amenable to any variation thought up, but don't forget that the computers play leaves at lot to be desired and should be one priority area for Three-sixty to improve as much as possible as more BattleSets are released. Once a certain proficiency is reached, the bigger scenarios are only more daunting because the enemy has more assets to throw at you – it doesn't play any better.

Finally my undying gratitude goes to all in the Gamers forum on CompuServe who have discussed **Harpoon** tactics with boundless enthusiasm. SP

ATF II

Is It A Bird? No, It's A Plane!

by John Scott

ATF stands for Advanced Tactical Fighter, the hi-tech fighter plane of the future. Once you clamber into the shiny new cockpit and take the plastic cover off the seats the objective is simple – fly the ATF through a series of dangerous attack missions, supporting allied ground and sea forces with the ultimate goal of defeating the advancing enemy.

Up, Up And Away

Before take off there are a number of options to choose from. For example, who is going to pilot the plane? You can choose from one of eight pilots (from the rawest, greenest rookie to the biggest, baddest whatsit in the valley) each representing a different difficulty factor. Then you'll want to get tooled up. It is possible to refuel and rearm the craft loading up with cannon rounds and air to air or air to ground missiles.

There are a number of maps from which to select a battlefield. Do a world tour, or focus in on a smaller part of the globe, such as South East Asia, Middle East, Central America, or the British Isles.

After take off, the instrument panel contains the usual sort of things that you expect to find in a hi-tech winged warbeast: maps, flight instruments, a database containing information on allied and enemy targets, a damage report display, and a weapon display which shows what weapon is currently selected and whether it is locked on target. In addition to this, the usual Head Up Display, and target select are also present.

If this is all beginning to sound a bit complex, don't worry – the actual flight skills needed are minimal, since the aircraft itself will do so much of the work for you. Even that most terrifying of flight experiences, the landing, is a cinch. Just press the right button and the ATF will do it for you, no worries.

Battle Targets

So far, as an alert reader of *Strategy Plus,* you will be thinking that this sounds just like a standard arcade game, so where does the strategy come in? Well, each type of target has a specific part to play in the overall battle. Factories repair and manufacture weapons like ships and tanks. Fuel depots govern the maximum range of mobile units, and communication bases control the intelligence and deployment of mobile forces.

Graphically the game begins very nicely, with some very well presented opening screens. Unfortunately when you get into the actual flight, it all becomes much more basic. What you get is a rear view of your plane flying over a checkerboard terrain with minimal ground detail.

Down To Earth

Anyone wanting a good fighter pilot simulation can choose from a very wide range: **Falcon, Interceptor**, almost any of the Microprose offerings. When **ATF II** is compared to any of these, it is very quickly apparent that it just doesn't make the grade. The graphics are frankly outdated, the realism factors aren't there, it lacks the wide choice of mission selection now standard in these games, and the tactical element is not overly taxing, to say the least.

Forget tactics. What we have here is a game pretending to be something other than it really is: the kind of game I was playing in the arcades years ago. SP

Designed by
Rod Swift and Kevin Besant

Published by
Digital Integration

Price £24.99

Available for the Amiga and ST
Reviewed on the Amiga

SIMULATION REVIEWS NEXT ISSUE

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY

UMS II

DAS BOOT

BLUE MAX

TYRANNO EX!

Come The Evolution

by Steve Jones

THERE have been very few games published on the subject of Evolution, and those that have are as dead as the dodo. This is curious since the central core of the theory involves competition, an essential element in any good game. This suggests that nobody has come up with a satisfactory game mechanism yet. So when the designer of the excellent **Die Macher** comes up with an Evolution game, one is prompted to sit up and take notice.

The object of the game couldn't be simpler: score more victory points than anyone else. Victory points are earned by having animals survive for as long as possible; the longer an animal survives, the more victory points it will earn. At the start of the game, the players are given a disc holder, five coloured cubes of their colour, a '5' stone, and 12 environment discs selected at random from the small bag (*à la* **Scrabble**).

Turn By Turn

At the start of each turn, the players each select a new animal (there will usually be four to choose from) and place it in their slots in the first row of the playing surface; the starting strength of these animals is 1. Each animal card has on it a cartoon drawing of the animal, its name, and three of the seven environment symbols; these three characteristics represent the conditions under which the animal will thrive.

During the course of the turn, the players attempt to change the current environment to one which suits their respective animals, and fights take place between the animals. At the end of the turn, all animals have their environmental characteristics compared with the current environment. Those which have no match at all die out, and the survivors all automatically move one space along their respective columns. Victory points are then added up according to which row on the playing surface the animal is occupying; one additional victory point is earned per animal for every vacant space in its row.

Player interaction occurs in two phases each turn: in the environmental change phase, and in the fight phase. Environmental change is affected in a simple and ingenious manner. Players place environment discs, two at a time, upside down in the potential slots on the environment chart; this occurs three times in the first turn, four times in the second turn, and five times thereafter.

The Natural Selection

Whenever there are more discs in a potential slot than there are in its associated current slot, the current environment changes. The 'old' environment discs are returned to the bag, and the potential environment discs are turned up. Whichever characteristic is the majority becomes the new current environment, its discs are moved into the current slot, and the losers are turned upside down again and remain in the potential slot. It is clear that the more discs there are in a current slot the harder it is to change that particular aspect of the environment. It also pays to have a good memory for what discs remain in which potential slots.

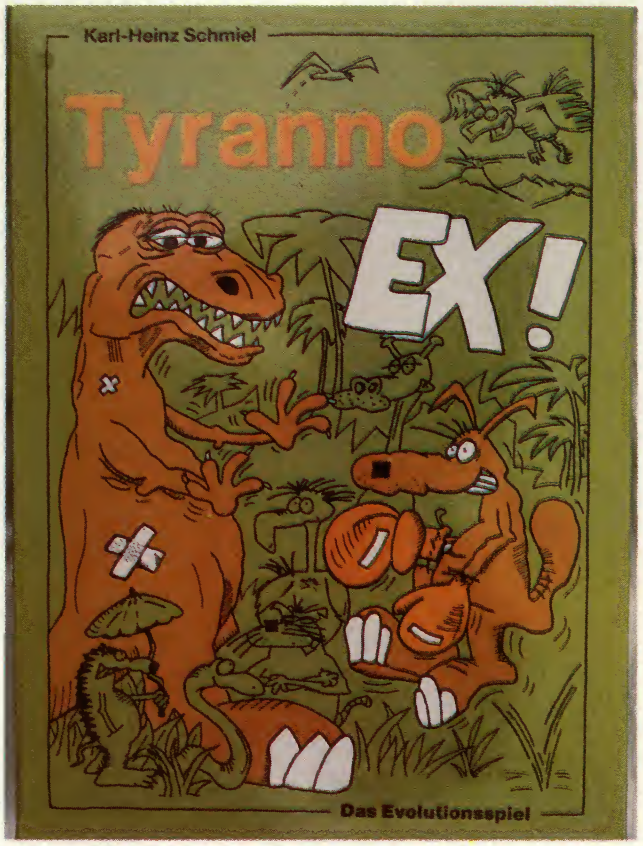
Like Father Like Son

There are a few additional wrinkles to this environmental change phase. If you are not satisfied with the discs in your hand, you may elect not to place two discs and exchange three discs from the bag instead. Whenever the current environment changes, if any animal has all three of its environmental characteristics represented in the current environment, its strength is increased by 1; this has consequences in the fight phase. Also, when the fifth placement occurs, players may play their '5' stone: this entitles them to place four discs at once instead of the usual two.

At the end of the environment phase, players take discs from the bag to increase their in-hand total back up to 12. This game mechanism for changing the environment works extremely well. It gives the game a high degree of player interaction by giving the players direct control over what environment they want. The drawback, of course, is that your opponents don't want the same environment as you. And, in the final analysis, how well your animals do depends upon how well matched they are to the final environment in each turn; but then, that's evolution for you.

In the fight phase, animals may elect to fight other animals directly. The players involved total up the number of environmental discs in the current environment which match their animal's characteristics: this decides how many dice the players get.

Continued page 54



Designed by Karl-Heinz Schmiel

Published by Moskito Spiele

Price £17

2-4 players

Playing time: 2 hours

Available from Just Games, from whom an English translation of the rules should be available by the time you read this.

1835

Prussian Roulette

by Stuart Dagger

WELCOME again to the granny flat, home for those who still think of games as social events and who suspect that computer games were invented to prove that playing with yourself really can make you go blind.

I should probably begin by confessing that I have been an **1829** fan for fifteen years. I still rate it as the cleverest game system ever devised. I was very pleased when it was joined by **1830** and by **1853**, and so it was inevitable that I'd get excited when news came through of this latest addition to the series. However, although a welcome for **1835** was almost assured from addicts such as myself, I am aware that it would need to be more than just one of the earlier three on a map of Germany before I could reasonably recommend it to the rest of you.

Having the same game on lots of different maps is wonderful if we are talking **Railway Rivals** and **Railway Rivals** prices, but it is hard to justify if each new version steams in at thirty quid or so. Fortunately, **1835** does have more to offer, a lot more, but before I start trying to tell you what it is that makes it special I feel a few words are in order for those who have strayed in from the front of the magazine. After all, I read the computer section, and so some of the mouse brigade might be reading this.

1829 is a game about the development of the railways in 19th century Britain, and it is really two games cleverly interleaved to form one. In the first of them players buy and sell shares in the ten or so public companies on offer; in the other the companies seek to develop profitable routes and, if possible, to hinder their rivals.

The actions of each company are determined by its largest shareholder, and who this is can change as a result of actions in the share dealing rounds. The object is to have the largest personal fortune at the end of the game. Normally this results in managing directors running their companies for maximum profit and maximum appreciation of share values, but there are ways in which someone who controls two or more companies can milk some for the benefit of others, in which he or she just happens to have a greater personal stake. It is here that the games can get splendidly dirty.

New Arrivals

In the last five years **1829** has been joined by **1830**, which deals with the railways of the North-Eastern States of America, and by **1853**, which deals with those of India. All three games were designed by Francis Tresham, and each is significantly different as the result of the successful incorporation of game mechanics simulating conditions peculiar to the early railway history of each country. In Britain it was the inter-company battles, both locally and in Parliament, to gain building rights on profitable routes; in the USA it was the way that directors could, and did, defraud their stock holders before getting out and leaving someone else holding a company with crippling debts; and in India it was the Government supervision forcing companies to develop as it wanted rather than as they might have.

German Peculiarities

The new game maintains this tradition of drawing on national features and does so in a way that results in a strongly individual game. The underlying game system is the same as in Francis's games, but when it comes to devising successful strategies you are back with a clean sheet of paper.

The peculiarities in the case of German railway history were a late-forming giant company which resulted from the amalgamation of a group of hitherto minor ones, and the tendency of the pre-unification states to step in with compulsory purchase orders for railways which had begun as private companies.

Handled badly either of these ideas could have had a deadening effect on the game, but the skilful treatment they receive avoids the potential pitfalls and turns both into major assets. I am especially impressed by the way that the designer has handled the second: one would expect anything smacking of nationalisation to impede share trading, but his rules have given it a definite boost.

The game box is pleasingly heavy, and opening it reveals all the things that those familiar with the earlier games would expect – map-board; **1830**-style share price chart; yellow, green and brown track tiles; share certificates and so on. I have always been happy with the components supplied by Hartland Trefoil and by Avalon Hill, but these are slightly better finished – rounded corners to the share and train certificates, good quality card of just the right degree of shininess, charters in company colours on which you can keep each company's trains and money, and even a small train piece to help you

Designed by
Michael Meier-Bachl

Published by
Hans im Glück

Price £35

Players 3–7

Playing time 4 hours

keep track of whose turn it is to start the next share buying round.

German games companies have a high reputation for not cutting corners on the quality of components, and Hans im Glück haven't let them down. My one gripe concerns the denominations chosen for the money: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 200, 500. Why, you might ask, are there no 100 DM notes? It is a strange omission, and it results in the banker having to do a lot more work than necessary, organizing change and finding out who is hogging all the 50s. The only game I know which gives similar amounts of practice in sorting out change is the original Intellect edition of **Hare and Tortoise**.

A quick look at the tiles shows there to be a few new ones among the yellow and brown stations and quite a lot among the green ones. These turn out to be tied to important towns, but not quite in the way you are familiar with. Berlin and Hamburg get the reserved specials treatment that places such as London, Liverpool, New York and Baltimore are accorded in **1829** and **1830**, but below this you have two groups of cities, totalling nine in all, which, though not quite as profitable to operate from as Berlin and Hamburg, are still a step up from standard large towns. Their existence and spread reflects the fact that Germany has always been less centralised than many countries, and in game terms it means that it is not a case of one really big honey pot (London in **1829** and New York in **1830**) and a couple of lesser ones.

You can make good profits in any area of the country, provided always that you get the building right. And the variety of the tiles for these intermediate cities gives you lots of choices as you attempt to do so.

The majors and not-quite-majors approach that is used with the cities is also adopted with the companies, and here the designer has come up with a really new idea. There are six private and seven standard share-issuing companies of the sort you get in the earlier games, but in addition there are six minor companies which are neither one thing nor the other. Like the private companies they are in sole ownership, but they function as scaled down majors. To make money they must build track and buy trains. They don't build track quite as quickly as the major companies, they don't have as much money to spend, they aren't allowed to own as many trains, they aren't allowed to buy extra stations and they don't have a quotation on the stock market. Nevertheless the fact that they all come in to play at the start, when at most one major company is operating, means that they dominate the early turns, getting both track building and money-flow off to a fast start.

The money earned by a minor company is split equally between the company and its owner. Once phase two of the game is reached the minors are entitled to trade trains with other companies, just as can a major. So they are useful, not just as a source of income for their owners, but as building and funding partners for a major company.

Part way through phase two the minors lose their separate identity and become constituent parts of an eighth major company, the Prussian Railway. The former owners receive shares in the Prussian, and the new company takes over the trains, stations and cash of its founding components. The precise timing of the launch of the Prussian Railway is in the hands of the player who owns the Berlin-Potsdam minor company, and the other owners can resist absorption for a time, but by the start of phase three all will have been swept up.

Prussia United

The other major innovation is the nationalisation rule that I referred to earlier, and in case the reader who wrote the Outraged of Essex letter in issue two is again contemplating setting fire to the magazine, I should point out that in this case it is not a matter of a state takeover, but of a managing director's putsch. When a player owns more than 50% of a company, he or she can force other share owners to sell out. These forced sales are at 150% of the certificate's current value. This might not sound like a good deal for the buyer, but there is a powerful incentive.

As players of the earlier games will know, there is a limit on the number of share certificates that a player may hold. In **1835**, if you own 80% of a company you may exceed this limit by one. So nationalisation enables you to squeeze an extra certificate into your portfolio, with all the benefits that that brings in terms of dividends and capital appreciation. This makes it good for the nationalising player, but it also has a beneficial effect on the game as a whole, for the player who was forced to sell is now back in the market for shares to fill the gap. The result is a stock market which stays lively for longer than in the earlier games.

Another feature which adds to the interest on the stock market is the greater number of double share certificates. Traditionally, the first share sold in a company has been a double, with all the rest singles. This double share has belonged to the director and is one of the attractions of controlling a company. In **1835** companies three, four and five each have two double certificates, and companies six and seven each have three. In the former case it is the first and last certificates that are doubles, which makes for nervous directors as they see this control-threatening big share in hands other than their own; in the latter it is the first three, which makes the floating of these companies both easier and more attractive. In the other direction, the super-powerful Prussian Railway, which in the later stages will probably be paying the biggest dividends, has no doubles, just eight 10% shares and four 5% ones, a fact which brings it back into balance with its rivals.

To conclude: this game has clearly been put together with love and with care. It has lots of new ideas to differentiate it from its predecessors, and they all work with a smoothness which does credit not only to the designer but to his playtesters. I recommend it strongly. SP

SPACE CRUSADE

Quest For A Hero

by Gordon Sweeney

SPACE CRUSADE is a game that pits an alien player against up to three marine players. It blatantly attempts to capture the atmosphere of the movie Aliens and to a certain extent succeeds. Inside the large and colourful box is a whole host of goodies including four game boards, rules booklet, mission manual, alien control panel, three commander scanners, fifty plastic Citadel miniatures and plenty more besides. The overall quality is first class as you might expect from a product in which Games Workshop have taken a hand.

Bolt From The Blue

Each marine player gets a squad of four marines and a commander. A marine can be armed with a bolter or one of three heavy weapons. Marines with the latter move more slowly and cost more victory points if they're killed. There is a choice of three weapons for the commanders, each offering a different trade off between firing and hand-to-hand values. However we found hand-to-hand combat to be a waste of time in attack and nothing to worry about in defense. Our commanders now always choose heavy bolters. Each marine player also picks an order card which allows the squad to perform a special manoeuvre and four equipment cards. The squads all have a few cards unique to themselves – this adds a bit of character to each.

The alien player gets a whole host of nasties to use. Most terrifying of all is the massive dreadnought (straight out of *Robocop*). I must say, though, having orks in the game doesn't quite seem right.

Whenever marines enter a board for the first time, the alien player places blip tokens on that board. Except for a few decoys, these correspond to alien pieces. Of course the marines don't know which ones. At this point, it's usual to scream 'There are dozens of them, they're all around us!' There's a chance to be nasty here – it's possible to place all the blips against one of the hapless marine players. The event deck adds a touch of spice and allows the alien player to be even more of a bully by playing booby trap or weapons jammed cards on the marines. Most of the cards are pro-alien and as one is drawn every turn, there is a strong incentive for the marines to get on with the job.

Hit For Six

Most of the rules booklet is taken up with examples and pictures. It's easy to read and explains the simple game systems well. Most of the information needed during play is displayed on the alien control panel and the three marine reference charts. For combat, there are special light and heavy weapons dice. Damage scored equals the attacker's roll minus the defender's armour rating. Apart from the dreadnought and the commanders, everything has only one hit point anyway. With six hit points, the commanders are almost as hard to kill as Sigourney Weaver and can be used to shield the more vulnerable marines.

There do seem to be a couple of omissions in the rules. There is no explanation of what a devastator is even though it appears on an event card. Can marines attack other marines? Is it okay to launch a missile attack against an alien while another marine is in the blast zone? The line of sight rule, while working fine most of the time, can lead to ridiculous situations such as when a piece you can't see blocks line of sight to another piece.

Lord Of Chaos

There are 12 missions in the mission book as well as some background notes and details of how to play a campaign game. The winner of this is the first player to reach the rank of Captain Senioris or Lord of Chaos. Since the course of each game will largely be determined by how the alien blips are placed, even the individual scenarios have a high replay value. With only two players, the marines ought to be stuffed. With four the alien might have trouble stopping them from achieving their primary objective, but since only one marine player can get it, they may have to stick their necks out a bit in the rush...

To sum up, **Space Crusade** is basically a lot of fun. In terms of bits and pieces it's definitely value for money. The rules are simple enough for it to be played very light-heartedly, but there is plenty of room for tactics. It's easy to design your own scenarios or tinker with the system. For my part, I'd like to add levels above and below the board with lots of access tunnels. That really would give the marines something to think about. SP

Designed by
Steven Baker

Published by
MB

Price £24.99

2–4 players

SINDBAD

Turtle Fodder

by Tony Ellam

THIS game casts you in the role of an adventuring seaman in the era of Sindbad. You stand on board your felucca in the port of Basra with just 10 000 mishkals, knowing the voyage will lead through perilous seas to a myriad islands.

Many adventures await before you return to Basra and civilisation for a brief stopover to trade and stash part of your hardgotten gains. To win you must be the first person to reach Basra with a fortune of a million mishkals.

The board shows the ocean, Basra and the Ports of the Orient, with the sea routes which link them running between the yellow Known Lands and green Unknown Islands. Four of these contain monsters and four are pirates' haunts. Two treasure caverns, the Pirates' Skull and the Thieves' Grasping Hand, lie off the charted routes. Treasures may be lost to these locations during play and players directed there may acquire any loot present.

1001 Treasures

The physical production is everything games players have come to expect from Flying Turtle, and the artwork on the cards is excellent. Player tokens are small ships. Black and red discs represent pirate and monster trophies. Small chests in four colours mark the treasures: pearls (blue), ivory (cream), amber (grey) and diamonds (clear). There are slightly bigger chests for five units of treasure.

The game largely revolves around two decks of cards: green for Unknown Islands and yellow for Known Lands. Each card shows a drawing of the situation, a pictograph for how to resolve it, and whether the incident is optional. Much of the rule book is devoted to description of the pictographs. These are not difficult, and the technique soon becomes familiar, though it is worth checking your interpretations for the first couple of games.

Green cards have additional information. Some have the 'adventure' symbol and all have a numerical value. These values may be used for movement in lieu of a die roll, or in the resolution of combats or other incidents.

A typical green card would be: 'Optional incident. Three scorpions guard seven pearls and a diamond. To get the treasure, play a pair of green 'threes' or make a die roll of 3 or better. If you roll a 1, you die.' Yellow cards might enable you to sell your amber at greater profit than in Basra, or lose a turn weathering a severe storm.

The Will Of Allah

A player's turn comprises a move, either by rolling the die or playing a green card, and some form of action – usually drawing a card. The drawn card is acted upon. Green cards are retained unless it is an optional incident and declined.

On a populated monster island combat will occur. The monster can be slain by playing three of a kind, or by rolling a 6. If you roll a 1 you die. Death is a hindrance rather than the end: you lose everything and start again back in Basra.

The pirates are tougher, requiring three 6 cards or a die roll of 6 to kill them, and they can also take treasure if not defeated. If slain the foe's marker is removed as a trophy to be cashed in at Basra for 250 000 mishkals.

Efreeti To Go

When players meet, challenges may ensue. Each selects a stake from his opponent's possessions: money, one of the four treasure types, or a trophy. The attacker plays up to four cards. The opponent must then raise the stakes by playing a better hand of cards, and so on until one player is defeated. All played cards are returned to the deck.

In the Ports of the Orient treasure may be purchased at prices that enable profits to be made in Basra. Nhill sells ivory, Ayr amber and Souan diamonds. Treasure may also be acquired here by recounting 'adventures' by displaying the relevant cards, thus reminding opponents of your card holding. This does not happen at Bur, which merely sells all three. Pearls can only be acquired on the islands.

Basra Bound

This game may not appeal to purists because of the substantial luck element. However it could be argued that this holds true to the theme as Sindbad was frequently a hostage to fortune, but always managed to turn it round. There is plenty of scope for skill and judgement in whether to play cards for incident resolution and movement or to save them for attack or defence in inter player combat. There is a knack to spotting who, and more importantly when, to attack. It pays to watch the cards drawn and played by other players.

If you want a short, well-themed, fun game and don't mind a hefty slice of luck in the outcome, there's a felucca waiting for you in **Sindbad.** SP

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Designed by
E Duchatel, J P Postel and J H Vanaise

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2–5 players

THE MANAGER

Perfect Pitch

by John Harrington

I'M STANDING here in one of the sumptuous new private boxes at White Hart Lane, home of Tottenham Hotspur football club, and I have with me Terry Venables, the Spurs manager. Terry, I understand you have a new board game out. Can you tell us something about it?'

'Well, Brian. It's a trivia game loosely based on a theme of football management. Players answer questions on one of three subjects: football, entertainment or general knowledge. If they answer the question correctly they get a +1 goal modifier in their next match.'

'I see. And how do they progress round the board, Terry?'

'Well, Brian. They roll these dice, see? One for your team, one for your mythical unnamed opponents. If you win, you move forward three squares and you get to buy a player. If you draw, you move forward one square and get to buy a player. If you lose, you're as sick as a Spurs shareholder and, like me, you can't buy any players.'

'Sounds interesting, Terry. What happens when you land on one of these squares?'

'Well, Brian. On most of the squares you get to pick up various cards. Some of these allow you to buy players on the cheap, some force you to sell – or give away – one of your players…'

'To Norwich, presumably?'

'Don't interrupt, Brian. Other squares give you a chance to earn more money by answering more difficult questions.'

'What is the effect of buying players. Does it increase your chances of winning, Terry?'

Not in my experience, Brian, no. The sole purpose of buying players is to increase the wealth of your club. You win the game by being the richest club, not by winning the title. Mind you, the rewards for winning the title are so great, you'd have to be a completely incompetent player…'

'What? Like Neil Webb?'

'If you say so, Brian. But to continue, if you win the title, you should win the game.'

'And how do you win the title, Terry?'

'By being the first to reach the end of the circuit, Brian.'

'So let me get this straight. You could win the game without ever actually answering a question correctly. Am I right?'

'Well, Brian, you could, but it's unlikely. The questions are fairly easy anyway, especially if you know a lot about Spurs and the career of Terry Venables.'

'You are widely regarded as being one of the shrewdest tacticians around, Terry. What advice would you give to players of this game?'

'Roll lots of good dice, and if you don't know the answer to a question, chances are the answer is either Spurs, Barcelona or Terry Venables.'

'Thanks a lot, Terry. Before we go, is there anything else you want to say?'

'Yes. Their last goal was definitely offside.' SP

Designed by Terry Venables and Paul Riviere

Published by Glenhope Management

Price £21.85

2–6 players

John Harrington is a Spurs supporter. Luckily he is not a shareholder

BOARDGAME REVIEWS NEXT ISSUE

AIRLINES

BATTLEFIELD EUROPE

REPUBLIC OF ROME

Tyranno Ex, continued from page 49

The players then roll their dice simultaneously; a hit is scored for each die roll which is equal to or less than the animal's strength. When the animal scores more hits than its opponent, it has won the battle. The fight continues until one animal has won two battles. If an animal loses 2-0 it is extinct and is removed from the game; if it loses 2-1, it is turned upside down and scores no victory points in that turn. When an animal defeats an opponent whose strength is equal to or greater than its own, its strength is increased by 1.

There are only two drawbacks to this game. First, some of the components, particularly the playing surface, environment chart and animal cards, feel flimsy and are not up to the usual solid components we have come to expect from German games.

The second is that an English version of the rules is not yet available, although Moskito Spiele promise this will be available in the New Year; in the meantime, several people are working on an English translation. In conclusion, this is an excellent little game. The art-work suggests that the game is aimed at the general family games market, but there are enough clever game mechanisms therein to attract the hardened gamers as well. Annoy a Creationist – go out and buy a copy. SP

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It Came For The ST

As a new reader of your magazine, I thought I would give a few observations which may help improve a magazine which holds promise to fill a gap in the marketplace.

In the first place, you almost lost me as a regular reader when I reached page 31 of the current issue (November 1990). I had already noted that your reviewers had a strong preference for PCs and Amigas. Well, that is their choice and I am certainly not going to instigate a puerile 'My computer is better than yours' debate in such a sensible magazine. It certainly concerned me, though, to see you inform your readership that **Conquest of Camelot** and **Loom** are not available for the ST. I am positive that both these games are, or soon will be available in that format. In addition **It Came From The Desert** is also being converted for release on the ST.

This raises two points. Firstly, what have you got against the ST? Are you trying to persuade strategy fans not to buy one? Secondly, surely it would be helpful in your reviews if you stated whether games are also under development on other formats. It seems to be a trend for developers to keep investments low by releasing games onto for example the PC while still developing versions for the Amiga and ST. There seem to be a number of excellent games available solely for the PC at the moment. Will they be released on 68000 machines? Should I buy a PC emulator? I really would like to know!

The saving grace, though, was the letters from C J Geggis and Andy Dalglish and your replies thereto. If you are managing to incense intolerant and elitist boardgamers then you certainly deserve my support. If your concern for the environment, shared by many right wingers and *always* a political issue, extended to using recycled paper then it would even be worth a subscription!

So to summarise, keep up the good work but give the ST an even break and advertise *all* formats in which a game is likely to be available.

Paul Bates
Derby DE3 8JA

PS Why does CJ feel that he has the right to push his neo-crypto-fascist agit-prop into everyone's homes via the medium of your magazine? Is it because he could never be considered even remotely charitable?

PPS Aren't meaningless hyphenated buzz-words wonderful as a substitute for rational thinking?!

Right on! Most boardgamers are okay. Some even manage to hold down proper jobs. It's only the lunatic fringe who have been complaining. We've got nothing against STs. In fact some of our best friends have STs, so the prejudice which you perceive, does not, in fact, exist. We cover whatever format comes first. However, as the majority of games covered by this magazine tend to emanate in the US, this usually means they arrive on the PC or Amiga first. This is due, in turn, to the poor American sales of the Atari. Our ***Loom*** *review (issue #1)* did *state that the game was available for the ST, though I admit we slipped up on* ***Conquest of Camelot****. To make up for this, we contacted Sierra and they are going to send you a list of their current and future ST releases.*

Most of PC games now require a fast processor. We would suggest a 80286 minimum. An emulator is not much cop either, unless you want to play in CGA. Your best bet is the PC games machine Amstrad are rumoured to bringing out next year (see news story).

Colonel boogie

I would like to congratulate you on a magazine at last dealing with the type of games I like to play on my computer: simulations and serious military oriented games. I subscribe with hope for the future. I presume that the reviewers you use will be reasonably conversant with this type of game. It really used to irritate me when other 'mainstream' computer mags would review a serious wargame by comparison with arcade type games. Often the reviewer would give a written sneer to the type of person who would enjoy this sort of 'Reely borin' game with lousy sound effects'.

I would like to see a reduction in the number of adventure games reviewed, firstly because I think they are catered for quite well in other magazines and secondly because I don't understand their attraction (probably because I'm crap at them). Finally I cannot let the apoplectic letter of Mr (Colonel?) C J Geggis remain unchallenged. Such a letter deserves earnest consideration of the issues. After a long deliberation I have come to the conclusion that it is down to the fact that he is probably a senile old fascist. Seriously, though, I cannot see any reason why Greenpeace shouldn't advertise in your mag despite the fact that I work in an industry that they have avowed to shut down. What I can't understand though is why they advertised in the first place. I mean you can hardly deny that *Strategy Plus* is a little biased towards the more militaristic of us, with bloody great tanks thundering across the cover. Life's a funny thing.

Howard G Whittaker
Blackpool FY5 1SN

Greenpeace advertised with us because we are a bunch of rabid lefties who just happen to like playing around with tanks.

Bulletin

First of all I'm impressed by the magazine, but that's not why I'm writing. I recently started 'Play by mail', which is really great fun, after playing the computer solo in adventure and strategy games. I've got an Amiga and am aware of adventure games that you can play on computer with a modem. There is no way, however, I can see of finding out about these systems. I would appreciate it if you could tell me of addresses and costs (subscriptions, modems etc) for such a system.

Thank you for any help you can offer.

Michael Tipping
Warks CV37 0PS

We would recommend the Armstrad 2400 modem which costs about £180. If you want to play multi-user games then check out Compuserve (see special offer on page?). Their on-line rates are about £12 an hour. Alternatively, there are a number of amateur bulletin boards who run multi-user games for next to nothing. A good place to start is The Small Furry Creatures Bulletin Board on 071. A number of games, such as the forthcoming **Red Baron**, offer a modem facility. You just dial up your pal (who must also have a modem, of course) and the manual will tell you where to go from there.

Soft Liftoff

I picked up the first issue of *Strategy Plus* on a newsstand in Los Angeles and was very impressed with the articles, especially the editorial concerning the magazine industry's relationship with the software houses. I hope your readership will continue to grow.

You may be interested to know that I am the designer of the boardgame **Liftoff** published by Task Force Games and which was reviewed in issue #13 of your predecessor, *Games*

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WANTED: To The Green Fields Beyond (SPI), **War To End Wars** (3W), **Gallipoli** (CCS) for Spectrum computer plus any other World War One games either board, magazine or computer. Quote your prices to Ken Fairclough, 68 Belfast Mead, Lyneham, Chippenham, Wilts SN15 4AQ.

PRIVATE COLLECTOR is still searching for **Homas Tour, Conquest of the Empire, Broadsides & Boarding Parties** etc. Offer a lot of german games in exchange. Dr K Rehders, Fritz-Reuter-Allee 68, D–1000 Berlin 47, Germany.

BOARD GAMES for sale. All in excellent condition, all £7. Waddingtons: **4000AD** (1972), **Formula 1** (1973), **Spy Ring** (1965), **Blast Off** (1969), **Air Charter** (1970). Ideal: **Tri-Ominos** (1968), **Cloak & Dagger** (1984). AH: **UFO** (1978), **Diplomacy** (1976). Yaquinto: **United Nations** (1982), **Marine 2002** (1979) – both mint. Paul Jefferies, 46 Towncourt Lane, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1EH. Tel 0689 834454. P&P not included.

NO INSTRUCTIONS for games bought at car boot sales: **Focus** – Sid Sackson, **Ruff House** – Parker; **Go For It** – Parker. Expenses paid. Thanks. Tony Johnson, 19 Woodland Rise, Wakefield, W Yorkshire WF2 9DN. tel 0924 372352.

FOR SALE: 32 *White Dwarf* mags between 52 and 98. Also *Fantasy Chronicles* 1-8 and *Imagine* 21. Best offer secures. Dave, tel 081-311 6692.

MANCHESTER Board Wargamers Annual Auction will take place at 1pm, Sat 2nd March, 1991, at St Chad's Chruch Hall (near Romiley Station), Guywood Lane, Romiley near Stockport. The event is open to anyone to buy and sell. For details, send large SAE to: 9 Tenby Ave, Manchester M20 9DU. Games can be accepted for auction on the day, but pre-registration, with lowest acceptable bids, is preferred.

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PLEASE, please can anybody supply me with, in reasonable condition, complete copies of Games Workshop's **Fury of Dracula** and West End's **Tales of the Arabian Nights**. Quote your prices to Stephen Taylor, Greenways, Cooling St, Cliffe, Rochester, Kent. Also wanted – *Games International* numbers 1,2,3,5,6,7 and 10. *(see ad on this page! – Ed)*

FOR SALE: Bottom Line, Chicago, Executive Decision, Junta, Kings & Things, Magic Realm, Oppression, Save The President, Titan, TV Wars, Ubi, Willow, 1839 and more! All in A1 mint condition or swap for **Energie Poker, Trade, Homas Tour, Mafioso**. Send SAE for complete list or tel 0407 720895.

WANTED: *Command* magazine issues 1,2,3. For sale: SPI, AH, TSR and other games and magazines. SAE for list to R Sandell, 2 Darell Rd, Richmond, Surrey.

AMIGA GAMES for sale: **Gridiron** £10, **Lost Dutchman Mine** (1 meg) £10, **Manchester United** £10, **Batman** £7, **F/A18 Interceptor** £10, **Gold of the Americas** £10 and **Silent Service** £10. Bill Hall, tel 0702 470725.

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OPPONENTS WANTED. Looking for computer or board wargamers in the North London and Essex area. S M Switzer, 24 Empress Parade, Chingford E4 8SL.

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FOR SALE C64 computer games. **USAAF** by SSI and **Stalingrad Campaign** by Sim Can £15 each. **Crusade in Europe** and **Pirates** by Microprose, and **B24** by SSI on cassette £5 each. Bill Hall, tel 0702 470725.

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Rebound, continued from page 57

International. I am now putting the finishing touches to the sequel. This will bring space exploration though the present day and up to 2020.

I also own the rights to the computer game of **Liftoff** and am currently in negotiations with a couple of developers. The computer versions will be loaded with digitised sound and film footage from the era.

Fritz Bonner
N Hollywood CA 91606
USA

*Yes, we understand there are some pretty sleazy newsstands in N Hollywood. But **Liftoff** is indeed an excellent game and one that could be made even better in software form. Any UK software houses interested in publishing Fritz's game should write to him direct.* SP

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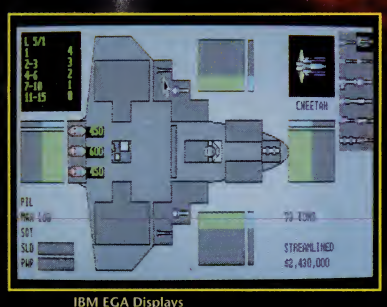

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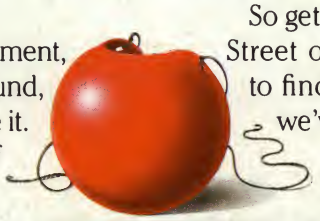

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